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A SKETCH

OF

OWEN BIDDLE,

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE PARKE FAMILY,

TOGETHER WITH

A LIST OF HIS DESCENDANTS.

BY

HENRY D. BIDDLE.

*PRIVATELY PRINTED.*

PHILADELPHIA.

1892.





✓ *Chas. H. Smith*  
*11-13-1725*

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*Chas. H. Smith*  
*11-13-1725*



## PREFACE.

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THE following sketch of Owen Biddle is reprinted from the PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY for October, 1892.

For a magazine article great condensation and brevity were requisite, but nothing of importance in his life, of which we are aware, has been omitted.

A short account of the Parke family and a list of his descendants to date (1892) have been added; and the oration delivered by him before the American Philosophical Society, March 2, 1781, will be found in the appendix.

In the genealogical part of my work, for valuable assistance rendered, I am indebted to Clement Biddle, of Chadd's Ford, Delaware County, Pa., and to Charles M., Clement M., and William W. Biddle, of Philadelphia.

H. D. B.

PHILADELPHIA, November, 1892.



# OWEN BIDDLE.

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OWEN BIDDLE was born in 1737, his brother Clement being three years his junior. Much has been written in regard to Clement Biddle; but of the life of his elder brother Owen no complete account has ever, so far as we are aware, been published. Allusions to and notices of him are to be found scattered through various publications, and it will be our effort to collect and arrange into one compact and connected whole such notices as have come under our observation, as well as briefly to record such facts as we are in possession of; so that it may be, in a measure, possible to form some estimate of the man, and of the character of the services he rendered to his country at a most important period.

He was a great-grandson of William and Sarah (Kempe) Biddle. William Biddle was one of the proprietors of West New Jersey. Much has also been written about him; suffice it here to say that the first deed granted by William Penn, Gawen Lawrie, Nicholas Lucas, and Edward Byllinge, for land in New Jersey to any purchaser, so far as yet ascertained, was that given for one-nineteenth part of West Jersey to William Biddle and Daniel Wills. It is dated January 23, 1676.<sup>1</sup>

Owen Biddle possessed a birthright membership in the Society of Friends. His early inclination appears to have been to the study of law. We have in our possession his copy of Blackstone's Commentaries, the first edition published in this country.<sup>2</sup> Whether he had any serious inten-

<sup>1</sup> This deed is now (1892) in the possession of Edward C. Biddle, Esq., of Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> This edition is in four volumes, with an additional volume as an Appendix, making five volumes in all. "Printed for the Subscribers by



tion of taking up the law as a profession we know not. If so, the intention was soon abandoned. His predilections were for scientific pursuits. He married, September 29, 1760, at twenty-three years of age, Sarah Parke, of Chester County, Pennsylvania, and for a short time carried on the clock- and watch-making business; but a few years before the breaking out of the Revolution he had engaged in the shipping and importing business. Their marriage was solemnized in St. Michael's and Zion Lutheran Church, and was by license. As they were both members, in good standing, of the Society of Friends, the reason of their being married in a Lutheran church is not known; but it does not appear that they thereby lost their right of membership in the Society.

He was one of the signers, together with his brother Clement, of the Non-Importation Resolutions of the year 1765.

His scientific and mathematical attainments were of a high order. His youngest daughter, born in 1780, in a brief sketch of the family which she prepared at the request of some of his descendants, writes of him as follows:

"My dear father was a man of quick feelings and nervous temperament; . . . of good natural abilities, improved by an acquaintance with the standard authors of that time; but his chief attention was directed in early life to mechanics and scientific subjects connected therewith, which led him by degrees to astronomical studies; and in these he continued to feel much interest. I remember the first Orrery which at that early day I had ever seen, was a simple one he constructed to give us some idea of the motion of the planets around the sun. In these, and some other pursuits, he was occasionally associated with Rittenhouse and other men of learning and science in the Philosophical Society, of which he continued a member through life; though the latter part of it was almost exclusively devoted to other subjects, . . . and led him

Robert Bell, at the late Union Library in Third Street, Philadelphia, MDCCCLXXI." In each volume Owen Biddle has inscribed his name, 1771; then follows that of his son, John Biddle, Jr., 1781; then that of his grandson, James C. Biddle, 1833; then that of his great-grandson, Henry D. Biddle, 1871; thus covering a period of one hundred years, and including four generations in lineal descent.





to turn his attention to the improvement of the youth in our religious society."<sup>1</sup>

He had joined in early life a society called the Junto, which was a continuation of Franklin's Junto; and in 1763 he, together with Isaac Paschall, was appointed "to revise the laws and make a few alterations in them." Non-resident members were admitted after the 30th of May, 1766, when it lost its character as a club, and adopted the name of "The American Society for promoting and propagating Useful Knowledge." Among the names of members we find those of Edmund Physick, Clement Biddle, Isaac and Moses Bartram, Nicholas Waln, and David Rittenhouse.

As the aims of the Society were similar to those of the Philosophical Society, it was proposed to unite the two societies into one; and after considerable discussion, and some delays, the union took place in 1768, and thereafter was known as the American Philosophical Society, and the American Society ceased to exist.

The year after the union of the societies, the transit of Venus over the sun's disc occurred, June 3, 1769; and the Society made preparations for its observation at three different places,—in the State-House yard, at Norriton, and at Cape Henlopen; Mr. Biddle being assigned to the latter station; and Rev. Dr. William Smith, provost of the College of Philadelphia, David Rittenhouse, and John Lukens, surveyor-general of the Province, at Norriton.

The Rev. Dr. Smith writes,—

"Our great discouragement at our first appointment, was the want of proper apparatus, especially good telescopes with micrometers. The generosity of our Provincial Assembly, soon removed a great part of this discouragement, not only by their vote to purchase one of the best reflecting telescopes with a Dollond's micrometer; but likewise by their subsequent donation of one hundred pounds (this was in sterling money \$441); for erecting observatories, and defraying other incidental expenses. . . . An excellent reflecting telescope (though without a micrometer); the property of the Library Company of Philadelphia, and to which institution it was a donation from the Hon. T. Penn,—the same

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript of Mrs. Anne Tatum, 1842.



that had been used by Messrs. Mason and Dixon, when employed in settling the boundary lines of Pennsylvania and Maryland, was necessarily appropriated to the use of Mr. Owen Biddle, who was appointed by the Society to conduct the Observation of the Transit, near Cape Henlopen."<sup>1</sup>

The observations of all the parties were successful, and are published with full details in the first volume of the Society's Transactions.

The Rev. Dr. Smith in his communication to the Philosophical Society on the 20th of July, 1770, added the following extract of a letter from the Rev. Nevil Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal of England.<sup>2</sup>

"GREENWICH, December 11th, 1769.

"Mr. Maskelyne presents his compliments to Dr. Franklin, and shall be obliged to him when he writes to Philadelphia for enquiring of Mr. Owen Biddle what is the bearing, and what the absolute distance of Lewistown from the stone on Fenwick's Isle in English miles; or else what is the difference of latitude and departure in English miles? He may also, if he pleases, acquaint Mr. Biddle, that the latitude of the Middle Point between Fenwick's Isle and Chesapeake Bay, as found by Messrs. Mason and Dixon is  $38^{\circ} 27' 34''$ ; and the length of a degree of latitude, as measured by them, is 68.886 statute miles.

"Mr. Maskelyne would also recommend it to Dr. Smith, and the Norriton observers, to settle the bearing and distance in English miles between Norriton and the southernmost part of the city of Philadelphia, or else the State House square; as this will still further confirm the situation of the Norriton Observatory, by connecting it with Messrs. Mason and Dixon's meridian line.

"Mr. Maskelyne hopes the Pennsylvania observers will be so kind as to send us their observations of the transit of Mercury, which happened November 9th, if they were fortunate enough to see it; and any other observations they have made, which have not yet been sent here, tending to establish the difference of longitude."

And writing to Dr. Smith on December 26, 1769, he further says,—

"I could wish the difference of meridian of Norriton and Philadelphia could be determined by some measures and bearings, within one-

<sup>1</sup> Barton's "Life of David Rittenhouse," pp. 167, 169.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Rev. William Smith, D.D.," by Horace Wemyss Smith, Vol. 1. pp. 447-451.



fiftieth, or one-hundredth part of the whole; in order to connect your observations with those made at Philadelphia and the Capes of Delaware, as also to connect your observations of the longitude of Norriton with those made by Messrs. Mason and Dixon, in the course of measuring a degree of latitude. I hope to be favored with an account of your observations of the late transit of Mercury if you made any, and of the late eclipse of the moon. I shall be obliged to you for the continuance of your correspondence, and am Sir, yours, &c.,

“NEVIL MASKELYNE.

“TO REV. DR. SMITH.”

On the 24th of June, 1778, just one week after the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British army, David Rittenhouse, Rev. Dr. Smith, John Lukens, and Owen Biddle were busied in making observations on an eclipse of the sun.<sup>1</sup>

There were in Philadelphia at that time several educated and scientific foreigners, who also engaged in astronomical observations; an extract of a letter from one follows, who, however, was not skilled in the use of the English language.

“PHILADA., June 30, 1779.

“DR. SIR

“For to accomplish my purpose, I take the Honour in sending you, to your Insight, a calculation of the late celebrated Eclipse of the Moon, passed May the 29th. In case it should gain your applause, and finding it to be of any utility, you may communicate it to other respectable Members of the Philosophical Society at Philadelphia; which after perusal, you will please to deliver to Mr. David Deshler, and so likewise the calculation of the Eclipse of the Sun last year past, which I left to your Hands when there. . . .

“Pray dear Sir! excuse me if my Performances should be found too much in a High German Dialect, which is particularly to attribute the want of English Mathematical Authors, for so to express myself acceptably in that very term in Custom by this Nation. . . .

“I am, Sir

“Your most obed't and humble Serv't,

“DANIEL FREDHART.

“OWEN BIDDLE, ESQUIRE.”

It appears to have been a difficult task at that time to print a volume such as was the first of the Society's Trans-

<sup>1</sup> Barton's "Life of David Rittenhouse," p. 261.



actions. In August, 1769, a committee was appointed to attend to the matter, and a whole year elapsed before the astronomical papers were finished. The Society presented each member of the Assembly with a copy, together with an address, in which they state that

“it will give satisfaction to the members of the honorable House to find that the Province which they represent can boast of the first Society, and the first publication of a volume of Transactions for the advancement of useful knowledge on this side of the Atlantic; a volume which is wholly American, in composition, printing and paper; and which, we flatter ourselves, may not be thought altogether unworthy of the attention of men of letters in the most improved parts of the world.”

A number of the members of the Society, in the year 1770, formed a “Society for encouraging the culture of silk in Pennsylvania.” It was a favorite project of Benjamin Franklin, and although it proved a failure, some notice of it may be here given on account of Mr. Biddle’s connection with it. It was the first effort of the kind made in the northern portion of this country, although in the South it appears to have been attended with considerable success.

Dr. Franklin, who was then in England, had written to Dr. Cadwalader Evans,

“that if some provision were made by the Assembly for promoting the growth of mulberry trees in all parts of the province, the culture of silk might afterwards follow easily. . . . It is the happiest of all inventions for *clothing*. Wool uses a good deal of land to produce it, which if employed in raising corn, would afford much more subsistence for man than mutton amounts to. . . . Mulberry trees may be planted in hedge rows, in walks or avenues, near a house, where nothing else is wanted to grow.”

A petition dated the 2d of February, 1770, was sent to the Assembly, “Signed in behalf, and by unanimous desire of the Society at their meeting, by Thomas Bond, V.P., and Samuel Rhoads, V.P.,” begging their aid in establishing a filature at Philadelphia; and a company was organized with the following managers and treasurer: Dr. Cadwalader Evans, Israel Pemberton, Benjamin Morgan, Moses Bartram, Dr. Francis Alison, Dr. William Smith, John Rhea, Samuel





Rhoads, Thomas Fisher, Owen Biddle, Henry Drinker, Robert Strettell Jones, Managers; Edward Penington, Treasurer.

It appears to have been made a stock concern; subscriptions were made in aid of the Society by a majority of the most respectable inhabitants of Philadelphia, headed by Hon. John Penn, who subscribed £20, and William Allen and James Hamilton each £15. The total subscriptions amounted to about £900; and the Assembly afterwards voted £1000 towards the object.

Premiums were given to those persons who raised the greatest quantity of cocoons; and a prize of £10 was given in 1771 to Joanna Ettwein, of Bethlehem, and another was awarded to Mrs. Susannah Wright, of Columbia, Pennsylvania, and from the silk woven from her cocoons a court dress was made for the Queen of England, which was presented by Dr. Franklin, and samples of the same were deposited in the Philadelphia Library.

On the 5th of January, 1770, Mr. Biddle was elected one of the curators of the Philosophical Society; and on the 18th of May of the same year, the Society appointed him, together with Mr. Joel Bailey and Richard Thomas, to take the courses and distances from New Castle Court-house to the State House Observatory, in the most careful and accurate manner, that the latitude and longitude of each might be determined; and at a meeting of the Society, held 23d of July, 1770, Mr. Biddle, in his account to the Society of the measurements he had made, read the following letter received by him from the Rev. Dr. Smith:

“PHILADA., 23d July, 1770.

“DEAR SIR: Since you finished your measurement from New Castle Court-house to the Philadelphia Observatory in the State-house Square, the 58th vol. of the [Royal English] Philosophical Transactions has come to hand, containing the whole work of Messrs. Mason and Dixon; and it is with great pleasure I find, that the longitude of the middle point of the peninsula (and consequently of your Observatory at Lewes) in respect to Philadelphia, will come out almost entirely the same from their work as yours, altho’ obtained by different routes.”



The great interest which the Philosophical Society had manifested in the transit of Venus of 1769, and the success of the observations of the different committees appointed to view it, were of great value to the Society in bringing it to the notice of European savants, and had the effect of resurrecting it from its comparatively languid and nearly moribund condition, and of infusing new life and vigor into it.

On the 1st of January, 1773, Mr. Biddle was elected one of the secretaries of the Society; and on the 4th of January, 1782, one of the councillors. On the 2d of March, 1781, he delivered the annual oration before the Society; it being one of a series,—the others having been delivered by the Rev. Dr. Smith, Dr. B. Rush, David Rittenhouse, Timothy Matlack, and Dr. P. Bond.

The work of the Society was mostly suspended during the Revolution. On the 5th of June, 1781, there was a special meeting to hear Mr. Biddle's report of the situation of the Silk Society. He reported it to be a failure, and recommended that an Act of Assembly be sought for the transfer of the unexpended funds. A committee was thereupon appointed to draft the petition; and on the 15th of April, 1782, an Act of Assembly was passed "transferring the monies and properties to the Philosophical Society, who are to be accountable and re-deliver the same, whenever a majority of the subscribers to the Silk Society shall request it, to revive their institution."

We have thus grouped together, and recorded in a brief manner, the leading facts in regard to his connection with the Philosophical Society, and will now return to the year 1775.

On January 23 of that year he was appointed a delegate to the Provincial Conference, held in Philadelphia, and in which the resolve of non-importing was confirmed, and the encouragement of domestic manufactures was urged, especially that of saltpetre and gunpowder, "inasmuch as there existed a great necessity for them, particularly in the Indian trade."



Congress reassembled on the 10th of May, and General Washington was appointed commander of the army. The battle of Lexington had been fought on the 19th of April, and on the 17th of June that of Bunker Hill occurred.

These stirring and eventful times inflamed the ardor and aroused the zeal of the brothers Biddle. Although educated in the peaceable tenets of the Society of Friends, they both entered heart and soul into the impending contest. Owen remained at home engaged in public duties of a patriotic character, while Clement entered the army.

A committee was appointed June 30, 1775, termed a Committee of Safety for the province; "for raising Troops when they judged proper and necessity should require; . . . for paying and supplying them with necessaries while in actual service," etc., and they were authorized to draw orders on the treasurer for the above purposes. Owen Biddle was appointed a member, and was very active and efficient in his discharge of the duties connected therewith. On July 6 he was one of the committee for the construction of boats and machines for the defence of the river; on July 14 he was ordered to procure four tons of grape-shot; on August 15 he produced an order from the City Committee for lead and flints they had in their possession; on August 31 he was directed to procure for the use of the Board a "Seal about the size of a Dollar, with a Cap of Liberty, and a motto, *This is my right and I will defend it*, inscribed with Pennsylvania, Committee of Safety, 1775;" and on the 7th of September he is desired to procure a rifle that will carry a half-pound ball, with a telescope sight. On June 1, 1776, he is requested to procure, properly assorted, three hundred tons of cannon-shot; and on the 8th of June, James and Owen Biddle are authorized to agree for a sufficient number of storehouses in Germantown, to contain the salt, saltpetre, and other articles belonging to the Province, that may be thought necessary to send there for their better security; and finally, on August 7 he is desired to procure the necessary clothing for Col. Atlee's battalion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For reference to the above, see Colonial Records (First Series), Vol. X.



A conference of the delegates from all the County Committees was held at Philadelphia on the 18th of June, 1776, at Carpenters' Hall, to decide upon the mode of electing delegates to a Provincial Convention for the purpose of framing a new Constitution for Pennsylvania. Congress having recommended the formation of new State governments, this method of effecting the change, which was pursued in other States by a revolutionary convention, was determined upon, "for the express purpose of forming a new government for this Province, on the authority of the people only."

The convention was composed of eight members from the city of Philadelphia and from each county, all elected by the people: the delegates from Philadelphia being Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Kuhl, Owen Biddle, George Clymer, Timothy Matlack, James Cannon, George Schlosser, and David Rittenhouse.

They assembled on the 15th of July, 1776, and continued in session until the 28th of September, when the new Constitution was promulgated.

Owen Biddle's name is not attached to the Constitution. Neither is that of George Clymer. It is known that Mr. Biddle sat, on the day of signing, in the Committee of Safety, and was busy all day in paying off the members of the Convention. Whether in the hurry of business he neglected signing, or was opposed to some of its provisions, cannot now be ascertained from any accessible document.

On July 6, 1776, at a meeting of the Committee of Safety, George Clymer, Chairman:

"The President of the Congress this day sent the following Resolve of Congress, which is directed to be entered on the Minutes of this Board.

"In Congress 5th July, 1776.

"*Resolved*, That copies of the Declaration be sent to the several Assemblies, Conventions, and Councils of Safety, and to the several Commanding Officers of the Continental Troops, that it be proclaimed in each of the United States, and at the head of the Army.

"By order of Congress,

(Signed) JOHN HANCOCK, Pres'd't."









"In consequence of the above Resolve, Letters were wrote to the Counties of Bucks, Chester, Northampton, Lancaster, and Berks, Inclosing a Copy of the said Declaration, requesting the same to be publish'd on Monday next, at the places where the Election for Delegates are to be held."

The following document appears, a bill for expenses incurred in compliance with the instructions of Congress to transmit a copy of the Declaration of Independence to each of the places named; a photographic fac-simile of which we give :

"The Committee of Safety

"To Michael Kuhn, Dr.

"To go as an Express to Chester County 4 days at 15 . . .	£3. 0.0
"To do do Lancaster County 4 days . . .	3. 0.0
"To do do Potts Grove &c., 3½ days . . .	2.12.6
"To do do Bucks County 4 days, . . .	3. 0.0
	<hr/>
	£11.12.6

"Pay the above account being for services done by order of the Committee of Safety, as per the above account.

"OWEN BIDDLE,<sup>1</sup>

"10th July, 1776.

"To JOHN NIXON, Esq. & others  
the Committee of Acco'ts."

The following is a letter from Major (afterwards General) Thomas Mifflin to Owen Biddle.<sup>2</sup>

"CAMBRIDGE CAMP, 28th July, 1775.

"DEAR MR. BIDDLE

"You cannot oblige me more than by a Repetition of your last Favor, and may depend upon my Exertions to gratify you whenever a proper opportunity offers.

"Ever since we came into this Camp we have been employed in securing our Posts around the Enemy. Our works are near completed,—

<sup>1</sup> This document is in the possession of Edward C. Biddle, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> For this letter, and those which follow, we are indebted to the courtesy of Mrs. Neilson J. Ritter, of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, a daughter of the late John Biddle, Esq., and a great-granddaughter of Owen Biddle. They are selected from her large and important collection of family papers.



indeed they are already very formidable, and in my opinion impregnable to the Regulars in their present weak state.

"If you look into Aitken's Map of Boston Environs, you may be able to form an imperfect Idea of the two Camps. The Enemy are strongly posted on Bunker's Hill—a Cockpit or Redoubt on the Crown—two in the Centre, and a strong Line at the foot of the Hill. Their out Centries are posted about two hundred and fifty yds. from the Bottom of the Hill. Our advanced Post is near the same place. The Centries not more than 50 yds. from each other. Our works extend from Mystic River on the East, to Cambridge River, Roxbury & Dorchester Neck on the West. We have Winter Hill & Prospect Hill well secured with Redoubts, &c. —many works in the Intervals and on each River. By Deserters just come over to us we are informed that the Enemy have erected a Bomb Battery against our works on Prospect Hill & propose to open the Ball this Day, and that they have prepared a large Float to enter Cambridge River, & intend to burn this Town. These things are merely Gasconade, and if attempted to be put in execution cannot hurt us. They have already hardened our people by Bombarding Roxbury in vain; and plainly prove the want of strength to attempt our Lines by an approach.

"The Post is just setting off which obliges me to close my Letter without giving you the Actions of this day, which may be a busy one. Your Letter has not been in my possession more than 15 minutes. Had I rec'd it sooner you should have had a Letter instead of this bare acknowledgement of its answer. Make my best Respects to Clemmy and your Family, & believe me to be

"Your very sincere & att<sup>d</sup> Frd.

"T. MIFFLIN.

"Bunker's Hill is One mile and a few perches from Prospect Hill. Within Cannon shot. A mile & a half to Winter's Hill—The same."

On the 4th of March, 1777, the Supreme Executive Council and the Assembly under the new Constitution met; and on the 13th of March they established a Board of War, and a Navy Board; the former consisting of nine persons, of whom Mr. Biddle was one. He was appointed President of the Board on the 13th of March, and acted as such for several months. The Committee of Safety was then dispensed with.

On the 5th of May, Clement, who was with the army, writes to his brother as follows:



“HEAD QUARTERS, MORRIS TOWN,

May 5, 1777.

“DEAR OWEN

“I should complain of your silence did I not know how much you are engaged. . . .

“The affair at Danbury cost the enemy pretty dear. I think their loss must be 300 killed & wounded. We had destroyed abt 1800 bbls. salt provisions, 2000 bus. grain, 6 or 8 Hhds. of Rum & Wine, 2 or 3 of Sugar, & 1600 Tents. The arrival of three Vessels to the Eastward much more than compensates our Loss in every article. . . .

“Our Army begins to be very respectable, and in a few days our strength will be equal to the Enemy in the field. Our men are hearty, well clothed and provisioned, and in fine spirits—most have Tents and the whole will in a few days. . . .

“My presence here is necessary. I never will quit in dishonor, and am ready to render any service which my Country may require of me; but unless I am established on some footing better than at present, I cannot support it. . . . I never wish to withdraw myself from Danger while all around calls for the exertion of each individual. . . .

“With love to Sally & the children,

“I am, Dr Owen,

“Y<sup>r</sup> afft. Bro.,

“CLEMENT BIDDLE.”

By an Act of Assembly of the 13th of October, 1777 (the city then being occupied by the British), a body was created termed the Council of Safety, consisting of the Supreme Executive Council and nine other persons. Mr. Biddle was also a member of this body. This Council was dissolved December 6, 1777, by proclamation of the Supreme Executive Council.

In June, 1777, he was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Forage. His brother Clement was then acting as Commissary-General of Forage, and he became his deputy. The following document, stating the terms on which he was employed, appears; of which we give a photographic copy.

“Terms proposed for Owen Biddle, Esqr. A.C.G. Forage at Philadelphia for conducting the Business of the Department there.

“1st. That he be allowed one Quarter per cent by the States on all





monies drawn by him, and expended in the district South West of the Delaware.

"2d. That the same allowance be paid him by the Comy. Genl. of Forage to make up his Commissions, one half per cent.

"3d. The usual commissions to be paid him for purchases in his district of the City and County of Philadelphia.

"4th. Necessary Assistants and Clerks to be allowed him.

"5th. Office Rent to be paid by the States.

"N.B.—The whole accounts of the Department to be transmitted to Philadelphia for Settlement at the Office there, by him or a deputy in the Office.

"The Forage business being in great distress for want of a suitable Person to conduct it at Philadelphia; and not being able to procure a proper one for the purpose short of the above conditions, I am under the necessity of engaging Mr. Biddle, fearing the want of his Services should bring distress upon the Army, and confusion creep into the Department.

"NATH. GREENE, Q.M.G.

"Middle Brook, 1st April, 1779.

"I confirm the within on my part.

"CLEMENT BIDDLE, C.G.F.

"To OWEN BIDDLE, Esq.

"A. C. G. F.

"Philadelphia."

Which document is endorsed on the back: "The terms on which Major General Greene and C. Biddle employed me in the Forage department."

His cousin, Charles Biddle, who was then at sea, writes him as follows:

"MOLE, Feb'y 1, 1777.

"DEAR SIR

"I was in hopes to have seen you by this time, but one accident or another has prevented me. I expect soon to see the Brig here. I long to have a Cruize in her. I cannot express the uneasiness I feel at being here at this time, but hope soon to be with you, tho' I could make out exceeding well by staying here. Capt. Pickering in a Brig belonging to the State of Maryland, that fitted out at this place, cut out of the N. side of Jamaica a large ship and several small vessels.

"I have sent you by Mr. Hunter to the amount of fifty dollars in small articles that must neat a great Profit, and will bring or send the remainder by the next good opportunity. As I write to none of the



160 Spring Meadow, as my friend—

Edmund Biddle

John B. Biddle

Atty. Gen.

Washington

The terms on which  
Major General Green  
and L. Biddle employed  
me in the storage deposit  
were:







Family but you, please to give my affectionate love to them all, and believe me,

“(*Memo. by Owen Biddle.*)

“Dr. Sir,

Captain Biddle has remitted to me,

“Your most afft kinsman.

10 ps. Canvass, cost . . . £51.13.2

“& humble Serv<sup>t</sup>,

1 “Linen . . . . 6. 2.9

“CHAS. BIDDLE.”

Twine . . . . . 1.17.6

Pins & Needles, by Alex<sup>r</sup>. Hunter, 18.15.—

£78. 8.5

“26 May, 1777.

“OWEN BIDDLE.”

Mr. Biddle also joined with eighty other merchants in becoming personally responsible for about two hundred and sixty thousand pounds for supplies for the army, without which assistance it could not have been retained in the field.

The two following letters are in reference to the forage business :

From Owen Biddle to Clement Biddle.

“PHILADA. 30<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup> 1779.

“DEAR BROTHER

“ . . . Continental money goes on depreciating at a rapid rate. Hickory fire wood is at £90 per cord ; Flour £75 per hundred, and in many places in this State, Rye is at £12, Corn £10, Barley £8, Oats £5, Buck-wheat £6, per bushel. I see no prospect of the price reducing under the present situation of our funds. . . .

“I am, your affectionate Brother

“OWEN BIDDLE.”

From Owen Biddle to Colonel Charles Pettit.

“PHILADA Decr 31<sup>st</sup> 1779.

“SIR

“Agreeable to your Requisition I have endeavored to make out an Account of forage purchased in one year, which I have subjoined. It is chiefly taken from actual returns ; and where returns have not been made, the quantity is rated rather under than to exceed what I believe to have been purchased.

“It is not in my power to give you that satisfaction I could wish respecting the proportions used in different seasons of the year ; as many returns made into the office specify only the annual amount without distinguishing the monthly purchases ; but there is evidently more by near one third used during the winter than during the summer. The following account will differ from that which I rendered you the 21<sup>st</sup>. Inst., as





that was done hastily, which occasioned several returns to be overlooked and some districts not taken into the account, but it will appear that I had not exaggerated the quantity in that estimate.

"In the Eastern States the quantity of grain consumed is small compared with the quantity of Hay, occasioned by the use of oxen, which is an advantage worthy of note.

"An Account of Forage purchased and consumed in one year.

	Bus. Grain.	Tons Hay.
Purchased by Col. Finnie in Virginia . . . . .	88,085	327
Purchased by Col. Hut, part in Virginia, and part in Pennsylvania . . . . .	52,494	606
In Western shore of Maryland . . . . .	34,858	397
" Eastern do . . . . .	156,323	359
" Delaware . . . . .	117,395	700
" Pennsylvania, viz.,		
Philada. City and County . . . . .	41,235	2,705
Chester County . . . . .	26,689	578
Berks County . . . . .	37,615	214
Lancaster County . . . . .	67,213	1,469
Cumberland, York, and Bedford Cos. . . . .	43,413	752
Northumberland County . . . . .	10,075	315
Northampton, and Bucks Cos. (supposed to be, not having returns) . . . . .	60,000	600
In New York State (supposed to be, not having re- turns) . . . . .	100,000	1,000
" Jersey State (supposed to be, not having returns)	120,000	1,500
" Connecticut . . . . .	28,081	4,237
" Rhode Island . . . . .	3,923	1,803
" Massachusetts . . . . .	8,743	1,457
" New Hampshire (supposed) . . . . .	590	50
" Albany district, not included in the estimate for New York . . . . .	7,315	333
Total amount . . . . .	1,003,957	19,407

"Out of this quantity of 1,003,957 Bushels of Corn and Grain, about fifty thousand should be deducted which is sent from Virginia and the Western shore of Maryland, to the head of Elk; and which is included, in the quantity specified as purchased in Virginia and the Western shore of Maryland; also on the Eastern shore, which occasions it to be taken into the account.

"I am with respect

"Sir, y<sup>r</sup> obed<sup>t</sup> & hble serv<sup>t</sup>

"OWEN BIDDLE

"Ass<sup>t</sup> C. Gen<sup>l</sup> Forage

"COL. CHARLES PETTIT

"A.Q.M. General."



The celebrated Thomas Paine, author of "Common Sense," etc., when compelled to resign his commission as secretary to the Congressional Committee of Foreign Affairs, January 8, 1779, for publishing in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of January 2 and 5 of the same year two letters in regard to the supplies which Silas Deane and Beaumarchais professed to have purchased, which were really a present from the Court of France, became a clerk to Owen Biddle, and whilst in this position he still prosecuted his controversy with Deane. The next year (1780) he was appointed clerk to the Assembly of Pennsylvania.

Those members of the Society of Friends who had taken an active part in the Revolution were, after the war was over, denied their usual rights and privileges, and the Friends proceeded to disown them. On the 20th of February, 1781, the following persons met at the house of Samuel Wetherill: Isaac Howell, James Sloane, Robert Parrish, White Matlack, Samuel Wetherill, Owen Biddle, Moses Bartram, and Benjamin Say, and they organized a society of their own, which they entitled "The Monthly Meeting of Friends, called by some Free Quakers, distinguishing us from those of our brethren who have disowned us."

The number of members was said to have been about one hundred, among whom were Christopher Marshall, Timothy Matlack, Joseph Stiles, Peter Thomson, John Claypoole, and John Eldridge. They started a subscription for the erection of a meeting-house, and with the fund thus raised purchased a lot of ground at the southwest corner of Arch and Fifth Streets, and erected the building still standing there, with the inscription in its gable end testifying to its having been "Erected A.D. 1783. Of the Empire 8."

They also petitioned the Legislature for a lot of ground for burial purposes, and on the 26th of August, 1786, an act was passed vesting in the Free Quakers a lot on the west side of Fifth Street, between Prune and Spruce Streets.

There had been a contest in 1774 between the governor



of Virginia and the authorities of Pennsylvania in regard to the boundary-line between the two States. The fort at Pittsburgh had been seized by orders of Lord Dunmore, he claiming it was within the Virginia boundary; and troubles also arose with the Indians. On February 11, 1782, Owen Biddle was appointed to run the boundary-line between the two States, a work which he doubtless performed, though we have no record of it.

His residence was Peel Hall, which occupied the site of the present Girard College, and which was burned during the British occupation of the city, and it has usually been supposed was destroyed in retaliation for his activity in the American service. But upon investigation this proves to be erroneous. The Peel Hall property, containing forty-five acres of land, was purchased June 7, 1742, by Oswald Peel, who doubtless erected the mansion-house, and from whom it derived its name. In 1765 Oswald Peel died, and his executors conveyed the same to Turbutt Francis, who the same year conveyed it to William Dowell. He died in 1768, and on the 17th of April, 1771, his widow conveyed the same to Andrew Doz, who, on the 1st of April, 1775, conveyed it to Richard Penn.

It was during the ownership of Richard Penn that the building was burned (in November, 1777), the excuse being that it served as a protection for the rebels in firing upon the British.

On the 15th of February, 1779, Richard Penn, by his attorney, Tench Francis, conveyed the said forty-five acres, with the ruins of the mansion-house, to Owen Biddle, the deed reciting that

“the capital Message called Peel Hall, with the outhouses, improvements and gardens, being now torn down, burnt, and almost destroyed; and the tract or piece of land belonging thereunto being laid waste and opened to commons; the Fences which enclosed the same being taken away and destroyed; and the said Tench Francis, attorney for the said Richard Penn being mindful of the Trust in him reposed, thinking it most advantageous to the estate, and for the benefit of the said Richard Penn, to sell and dispose of the same; accordingly has contracted with



and sold the same to Owen Biddle for the consideration of Nine thousand three hundred and Eighty Seven pounds lawful money of Pennsylvania."<sup>1</sup>

The following letter is from George Lux, Esq. He had married Catharine, daughter of Edward Biddle, of Reading, Pa., and resided in Baltimore. Edward Biddle was a member of the Congresses of 1774 and 1775, but was unable to attend the latter Congress on account of ill health. He died September 5, 1779.

"BALTIMORE 25 December, 1779.

"DEAR SIR

"I did myself the pleasure of writing you by General Thompson a few days ago. In the letter I mentioned several letters being forwarded to Mrs. Biddle, and I did not think at the time of writing it, that I should have so good an opportunity of sending it directly to Mrs. Biddle without troubling you. I must now beg the favour of you to forward to Reading the letter for Mrs. Biddle accompanying this.

<sup>1</sup> Among those Philadelphia property-holders who suffered loss by the British occupation, according to an appraisement made in 1782, were: "Richard Penn and Sarah Master's estate, Northern Liberties, West, £4890," which doubtless included this property. Richard Penn had married Mary, daughter of William and Mary Lawrence Masters, May 21, 1772.

As it may be of interest to continue the title to this property to its occupancy by Girard College, we add the following:

Owen Biddle's assignees, on the 9th of December, 1784, conveyed to James Starr the mansion-house and nineteen acres, being the easternmost part of the tract; and on the 1st of May, 1785, they conveyed the westernmost part (twenty-five and one-quarter acres) to Henry Chapman. On the 3d of November, 1792, Henry Chapman conveyed to John Mayo; and on the 1st of October, 1794, James Starr, and on the 22d of November, 1794, John Mayo conveyed the same unto Jeremiah and Richard Parker. The said Richard Parker died intestate and without issue February 26, 1818, leaving two brothers, Jeremiah and William Parker, and four sisters, Lydia, Sarah, Eleanor (Parker) Foulke, and Rebecca (Parker) Hallowell. Lydia Parker died December 5, 1823, unmarried and intestate; Jeremiah Parker died October 27, 1827, having devised all his real estate to his brother William; and on the 6th of June, 1831, William Parker, Eleanor Foulke (widow), and John and Rebecca Hallowell conveyed the said messuage and forty-five acres of land to Stephen Girard for the consideration of thirty-five thousand dollars.





"This is forwarded by Mr Luther Martin, Attorney General for this State. I must request the favour of you, My dear Sir, to get both the plans of St. Peter's & Christ churches, and send [them] down by him: let them be particularly specified, so as to be obvious to the meanest capacity, for we must have a good Church in this town, if possible. Any expence arising from employing a Draughts-man &c., I will readily pay you on demand, & knowing the sum by Mr Martin; he is requested to call on you for the plans.<sup>1</sup> . . . Believe me to be

"Dear Sir

"Your Friend & Serv<sup>t</sup>

"GEO LUX.

"OWEN BIDDLE ESQ"

We select from an extensive correspondence a few letters to and from Owen Biddle, chiefly relating to the perplexities and troubles which he encountered in conducting the business of the Forage Department.

"PHILAD<sup>a</sup> Octob<sup>r</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 1779.

"DEAR CLEMMY

" . . . We had hopes that our Money would appreciate in consequence of the measures adopted by Congress, and a general wish prevailed for that purpose, and that ye prices of Forage would become more moderate and stationary. . . . Before I received your last letter I was convinced to ye contrary, & had made a formal application in writing for 1,200,000 Dollars as necessary for the Immediate supply of the Army & Cattle, agreeable to the requisition of Mess<sup>rs</sup> Chaloner & White, besides what might be wanted for forming magazines. Since then our necessities have increased beyond credibility, and for want of money we are obliged to decline the purchase of large quantities of Forage which has been offered for ready money, altho' I am certain some disaster must happen for want of it. . . . This you may depend on—that I cannot furnish forage for the army agreeable to your expectation or the wants

<sup>1</sup> In a memorandum-book of Owen Biddle, we find the following under date of January 18, 1780: "John Polwell has had at different times the following sums of money for a model of Christ Church; viz. 185, 56, 60 and 200 dollars."

This, of course, is in Continental currency.

In the same book, under date of May 31, 1780, he quotes the price of vegetables as follows:

"Peas at market this day . . . .	30 dols. a half peck.
Asparagus . . . . .	5 " pr bunch.
Cabbage plants. . . . from 15 to 20	" " hundred.
Butter . . . . . from 8 to 12	" " pound.
Radishes . . . . .	1 " " bunch."



of the army unless I am kept in cash to support the expences of the department. . . . For heaven's sake represent our situation, and obtain speedy and effectual advances of cash with which I will be answerable that you shall have a sufficiency of Forage, if it is to be had; but without I shall consider myself entirely freed from any obligation to provide for you. I would not have you consider this Letter as a matter of form, but *substantially* true, and to avert the distresses that must ensue, I do entreat your interposition. I am out of Forage (Grain, I mean), out of money, and I apply to you as my *dernier resort*, after other official applications have failed.

"I am Dr<sup>r</sup> Brother

"Y<sup>r</sup> very affect<sup>d</sup>

"OWEN BIDDLE, A.C.G.F.

"To COL. CLEMENT BIDDLE

"Commiss<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Forage

"New Windsor."

Owen Biddle to Colonel Archibald Steel, A.C.G.F.,  
Martinsburg.

"PHILAD<sup>a</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> March 1789.

"SIR

" . . . The very necessitous situation of the Public, for want of ways and means to provide suitably for the support of the several departments of the Army, makes me very unhappy, & I have no doubt but all those Gentlemen in power who have the management of our finances are equally distressed and much embarrassed; at the same time that I feel for our own distressed situation, & have the greatest compassion for them, upon whom all our complaints for want of Money must center; and like Atlas, they have a world of difficulties to support.

"After premising thus much you will readily imagine that the subsequent part of the Letter contains only an apology for not sending you the money you desire; as in truth, such has been my situation for several months past, that I have been obliged to borrow all the money I had credit for, to add to the little I received from the public, to pay the running expences of the office, and to answer some special Orders from my superiors in office.

"I suppose you have been informed that General Schuyler, Gen<sup>l</sup> Mifflin & Col. Pickering are appointed by Congress to make a general new arrangement of the staff departments; to inquire into the conduct of all staff officers &c. &c. From this appointment Congress have great expectations of some useful reform, and that they will adopt such plans of economy, that the future supplies will be more adequate to the public expences. I long for these Gentlemen to enter upon business, in hopes I shall be delivered in some way from my present embarrassments, which are almost insupportable; but we cannot shrink from the burden



at this time with reputation to ourselves, nor without great inconvenience to the cause in which we are engaged.

"I flatter myself these considerations will have the same influence upon us all; which will at least secure to us the approbation of our country; that will be some compensation for the sacrifice we are daily making, both of our peace of mind & fortunes.

"I am,

"Your Obed<sup>t</sup> humble serv<sup>t</sup>

"OWEN BIDDLE Ass<sup>t</sup> C.G.F."

From Major-General Arnold to Colonel Clement Biddle.

"PHILAD<sup>a</sup> March 11. 1780.

"DE<sup>r</sup> SIR

"I have applied frequently of late to the Forrage Master for Hay & Oats for my Horses, and can obtain neither, and they are now starving. I must request that you will give orders that I may be supplied with Both. If there is no Oats in the Magazines, I will order some bought, provided you will pay for them, which will oblige

"Sir,

"Your most Hble serv<sup>t</sup>

"B. ARNOLD MG<sup>t</sup>

"COLONEL BIDDLE."

His brother Clement had for some time found that the duties connected with his office as Commissary-General of Forage were, principally from not being supplied with the requisite funds for making the necessary purchases, very harassing and laborious, and he was now desirous of retiring from this vexatious post in order that he might devote some attention to his private affairs, which had suffered from neglect. He writes to Owen as follows:

"MORRISTOWN 18 March 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

"I wish to retire from the perplexities & embarrassments in which my Office is involved, but we must act with caution to obtain as large supplies as possible towards dis-charging our Debts; and the Love I have for the Army & my country, prevents my taking any hasty measures to quit the service when I see my presence is both useful & necessary.

"I must watch for the favorable moment to retreat, which I am more anxious to do on account of my numerous public Accounts which remain unsettled.

"Without your continuance for some time I shall be involved in still



greater difficulties—therefore am much obliged by your determination not to quit me hastily. . . . I know that Gen. Greene thinks our services cannot be dispensed with, if he is obliged to continue.

“Yr afft. Bro.

“C. BIDDLE.”

From Owen Biddle to Colonel Philip Marsteller, Lebanon, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

“PHILADELPHIA 18 July, 1780.

“DEAR SIR

“I have spared no reasonable pains to obtain money for you, but without success. . . .

“Your situation is deplorable but not singular; we all groan under public poverty, and wish devoutly to be relieved, but as yet cannot have our desires in any way; they will neither do without us, nor enable us to do for them. I have wrote as spirited a representation of our case to be laid before General Greene as I was capable, & insisted upon something decisive being done. If we are necessary to the Public, we ought to be supported; if useless we ought to be discharged. One of those alternatives I have insisted upon. . . .

“This morning Doctor Cochran came from General Washington’s Quarters; he informs us that Admiral Greaves, with six ships of the line & six frigates are arrived at New York, & that People who had come from N. York to Head Quarters say there has been another engagement between the combined fleets & the British in the West Indies, & that the latter has suffered considerably. This wants confirmation. We have no certain information of what is doing to the southward; only that most of the inhabitants of South Carolina had taken protection from the enemy; the simple sheep have foolishly leagued with the ravenous wolf; in consequence of which the militia in that State are ordered to turn out to defend themselves against the Rebels. This will probably be an active, bloody, and expensive campaign; but I do not conceive it will terminate the war, as the pulse of all the combatants beats high with expectation of Victory; and no disposition to submit to degrading terms which some of them must come to before there can be peace.

“I am with regard

“Your obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

“OWEN BIDDLE.

“COL. PHILIP MARSTELLER

“D. C. G. F.

“Lebanon, Lancaster County.”

The two following letters are from his brother Clement.





"MORRIS TOWN May 16, 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

". . . The calls of the Treasury Board on the subject of Accounts finally decided me on resigning, that I might attend at Philada. by the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.

"Accordingly I sent my resignation to Gen. Greene, & he sees the justice of my reasons, & approves of my retiring. I have wrote, & shall this day send my Letter to his Excellency, Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington, informing of the reasons which obliged me to take this step. Although I think he wishes me not to leave him, I think he cannot object to it, & I expect to be with you before the end of the month. My next Letter will probably inform you with some certainty when I shall leave this.

"I really quit the Army with reluctance, as I wish to serve my country; and I prefer the Army to the City,—but I can now be of little service by remaining; my feelings are hurt on several accounts; and the extensive & diffused state of my private Accounts alarms me when I think of my Family, in case any accident should prevent my personal attention to settling them. . . .

"Yr afft Bro.

"C. BIDDLE."

"MORRIS TOWN May 18, 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

"I have this morning received a very affectionate and friendly letter from Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington, which decides my leaving the Army, & shall set off in ten days, or perhaps sooner, for Philadelphia.

"If you can engage a house that you think will suit me, you may now do so with certainty.

"I am, Dr Owen,

"Yrs

C. BIDDLE."

From Colonel Charles Pettit to Owen Biddle.

"SIR.

"I have just now rec<sup>d</sup> a letter from the Board of Treasury, of which the following is an extract. This Letter seems to be in answer to one I wrote them yesterday, in which I mentioned the application I made on your behalf the 20th July for 140,560 dollars, and the general estimate of Col. C. Biddle, presented the 16th June. But what I here give you is all they say upon the subject.

"I am Sir,

"Your most humble Serv<sup>t</sup>.

"CHAS. PETTIT.

"3. Augt. 1780.

"OWEN BIDDLE ESQR."



"TREASURY OFFICE,  
2<sup>nd</sup> August 1780.

"SIR

"Your application dated the 31st. ultimo for Eight hundred and sixty thousand, two hundred and fifty-eight Dollars for the use of Col. A. Steel, William Cook, and J. Bennet, Deputies in the Forage Department, has been considered by the Board. It is not in the power of the Treasury to supply you at present, which renders it expedient to defer the requisite report in your favor."

In the month of July, 1780, General Nathaniel Greene resigned his position as quartermaster-general; and Colonel Timothy Pickering was appointed, on the 5th of August, to succeed him. There was considerable delay in his arriving at head-quarters, which did not happen until the 30th of September; and numerous letters passed between the brothers on the subject. Clement writes on the 15th of September as follows:

"CAMP, Sept. 15, 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

"I wrote by an Express which went yesterday, since which I have not much to add.

"As Col. Pickering was not arrived, and this day was the last on which our certificates had any validity by the Resolve of Congress of 29<sup>th</sup> ulto., Genl. Greene & myself waited on Genl Washington, & represented the case, which occasions much difficulty. An Express is gone off to hasten Col. Pickering to Camp, and the General is to give me a special power to give such certificates as are required for ten Days, or until Col. Pickering arrives. Nothing but the good of the Army and Service could induce me to act under such circumstances,—but from my attachment to them I must from my feelings and sentiments do all in my power till my successor arrives; and I earnestly pray it may be soon.

"With Becky's & my Love to you all,

"I remain,

"Yr affect Bro.

"C. BIDDLE."

"CAMP TAPPAN, Septem. 21, 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

"I wrote you a few days ago that Genl Washington had gone to Danbury to an interview with the Count de Rochambeau, and the Army is commanded by Genl Greene.

"Yesterday we removed from Kinderhook, about 8 miles back, to our old Camp at this place.



"The Troops have been frequently without beef, and I am sorry to see their supplies so short and uncertain. . . . We are without news yet of Col. Pickering, but surely the General's letter of the 16th must bring him up before this week is out. I am really anxious to get to Philadelphia with my Family.

"I am Dr Owen, with Becky's & my love to the Family,

"Your affect Bro.

"C. BIDDLE."

It was this time, during the absence of Washington from the army, while on a visit to Count Rochambeau, at Hartford, which General Arnold selected to meet Major André, near Stony Point, for the purpose of making arrangements with him for delivering up West Point to the British.

The following letters from his brother Clement and Geo. Lux follow :

"CAMP TAPPAN Sept. 26, 1780.

"DEAR OWEN

"General Arnold went off from West Point on board one of the Enemy's ships which lay below Stony Point; on Major André, the British D. Adj. Genl. being taken up by a party of militia, & a number of papers found on him, at Tarrytown; which discovered a plot for delivering up the Fort on this day; but the change of wind prevented their Ships coming up, and Major André being secured, brought the affair to light, just as Genl. Washington arrived at the Fort on his return from Hartford—but I have no further particulars yet.

"The 1st Pennsylvania Brigade marched last night for West Point, & the whole Army are under arms; this probably was the destination of the eight Regiments, supposed for Virginia, which I mentioned in the enclosed letter for you to communicate to Thos. Richardson.

"I shall set off on Thursday, unless Genl Washington should not arrive here to-morrow.

"I hope to see you by the middle or latter end of next week, & am,

"Dr Owen, Yr affect. Bro.

"C. BIDDLE."

"BALTIMORE 17 Oct., 1780.

(Wednesday)

"DEAR SIR

" . . . . Most people here were extremely shocked at General Arnold's treachery, but I must confess I was not; for I have uniformly thought him capable of every villainy, ever since the year 1776. Poor Major Scull gave me such instances of his mal-practices as fixed him a Rascal in my opinion, which no subsequent action of gallantry on his part could ever eradicate. The poor Major constantly concluded every



letter from Canada with expressing his fears that Arnold's treachery or rashness would be the ruin of our affairs in that quarter.

"I am glad to hear of the spirit of vigor exercised by your Council in banishing old Franks and Billy Hamilton. I am no advocate for persecution, but it is certainly time to throw aside that lenity to the disaffected, which has been so constantly abused; our State is too much so, but they have never had the enemy among them to arouse their feelings, nor discovered *any active treason in a man of note*. . . .

"We are told that Genl. Gates will be speedily in Philada. in order to have a Court of Enquiry upon him for his behavior at the Battle of Camden. Ill-natured people freely express their suspicions of his being bribed,—but it is a very ungenerous thing. He is neither insatiably avaricious nor profusely extravagant (both of which Arnold was),—and therefore has not the proper foundation of corruption. I pity him extremely, for he has lately lost his only son Bob, who died last week of a consumption; poor Mrs. Gates is almost out of her senses, for she persuaded her Husband to take command of the Southern army, which he at first intended to decline; so that she incessantly exclaims against herself for being the cause of his misfortune. It is said here Genl. Greene is to take command of the Southern army, which I hope will be the case; for Genl. Smallwood, though sensible and clever, has not alertness and activity enough in his composition for so important and complicated a command. . . .

"Please to remember Kitty and me particularly and affectionately to Cousin Sally, Johnny, and the rest of your Family,—to Uncle John, your brother Clem. and his Lady, Genl & Mrs. Wilkinson, Dr. and Mrs. Hutchinson. Kitty is very well considering her situation.

"I am, Dear Sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"GEO. LUX.

"OWEN BIDDLE, ESQR."

From Owen Biddle to Colonel Robert L. Hooper, Easton, Pennsylvania.

"PHILADA., Dec'r. 31, 1781.

"DEAR SIR

" . . . I have sent by the return of the waggon one Barrel of Madeira Wine cont<sup>s</sup> 25 Gallons. Col. Marshall chose the Pipe for General Washington, Col. Pettit, Col. Biddle, and yourself, and I hope it will prove to your satisfaction. I am with great Esteem

"Your friend and humble Serv<sup>t</sup>

"OWEN BIDDLE.

"TO COL. ROBT. L. HOOPER, JR.

"D.Q.M.G., Easton."





In 1782 the war was practically over, and during its continuance Mr. Biddle had suffered much thereby in estate. Three of his vessels had been captured and destroyed by the enemy, and his losses otherwise appear to have been large.<sup>1</sup> He had a family consisting of a wife and seven children; the eldest, a daughter, being then twenty-two years of age. These were not the days of large pensions. He was compelled to make an assignment for the benefit of his creditors, which he did, January 8, 1783, to James Bringham, Richard Wells, and John Field.<sup>2</sup> His property proved more than sufficient to satisfy his creditors, and after distribution had been made a small surplus remained.

About this time he became melancholy and despondent.<sup>3</sup> He viewed his past conduct—that of taking such an active part in the Revolution—not merely as blameworthy but as culpable; and he was so much affected as to offer a paper of “acknowledgment” on the 30th of May, 1783, to the Monthly Meeting of Philadelphia. The minute made by the clerk for the occasion was: “A paper offered by Owen Biddle

<sup>1</sup> From his memorandum book:

“April 4, 1782. Capt. McNachton brought Jos. Hill’s protest of the loss of the Ship *Minerva*, Capt. Earle.

“May 2nd, 1782. This morning we received intelligence that a large fleet of outward bound vessels were mostly captured by a number of British frigates which are cruising off our capes; and that six inward bound had shared the same fate. Likewise by a person from New York, that a packet had arrived the 28th of last month, and that the current talk in New York was that she had brought an account that Great Britain had consented to acknowledge the independence of America.

“June 2nd, 1782. First day. Yesterday we received an account of further losses by sea, which leaves but little behind. We are brought nearly to that situation which is blessed, for having nothing to expect, we shall not be disappointed.

“The proceeds of the schooner *Little Tom*, and an adventure on board the brig *Joanna*, are both arrived in New York.”

<sup>2</sup> James Bringham and Richard Wells subsequently reassigned to John Biddle, Jr., and Thomas Stewardson.

<sup>3</sup> His daughter, Mrs. Anne Tatum, says, “I have understood he was for a season unfit, from depression of spirits, to attend to the common concerns of life. . . . His indifference to the accumulation of wealth remained a striking feature of his character through life.”



being read, a degree of solemnity prevailed, in which the sympathy and satisfaction of the meeting were evident."

In this paper he says,—

"I have been made sensible of my past deviations. . . . I was led into taking an active part in the late war, and joining in the measures which led thereto. I became instrumental, in some measure, to a series of public calamities and private distresses, the unavoidable consequences of war, which, through mercy, I have been favored to see, is contrary to the nature and precepts of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. A conduct so unguarded, and contrary to the peaceable principles of Christianity has brought remorse and sorrow. . . . To be restored again to membership with you is the sincere and fervent desire of your friend,

"OWEN BIDDLE."

This acknowledgment, offered at a time when he had, in the estimation of the major part of the community where he resided, rendered valuable and important services in the accomplishment of the independence of his country, and was therefore undoubtedly held in high esteem and honor, showed, we think, as much moral courage as was required of him when he threw off the Quaker yoke and entered so heartily into the war of the Revolution. It was an illustration, and a conspicuous one, that in so doing he was actuated by lofty principle, and was determined to follow his conscientious convictions of what he deemed to be right and proper, however humiliating they might be, and regardless of the views and opinions of others. He was willing to relinquish all the honor to which by his services he was entitled, and to make public avowal that, on calm reflection, he was convinced he had erred and transgressed. We must respect and esteem a man who makes so open and candid a confession, even though we may think his judgment to have been mistaken.

In a manuscript which he left (though there is no date to it), he says,—

"In the course of my commercial affairs it has been my concern to promote things honest in the sight of men, and desirous to appear approved in my own mind. . . . Towards the latter period of the time



which I continued in business, I was engaged in publick concerns greatly to my injury ; and while in this station my affairs were unattended to in such a degree, that I could not wind up with that satisfaction which I could wish ; but believe that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. I am encouraged to hope that these events will prove essentially beneficial to me and my posterity in the end."

Thereafter, for the remainder of his life, he was in close unanimity with Friends. It is believed by his descendants that he then destroyed what papers he may have possessed regarding the Revolutionary War, as few of any importance have been discovered among his effects ; and what documents they do possess, relating to him, have been principally derived from other sources.

In the year 1790 he published a tract<sup>1</sup> on the propriety of establishing a boarding-school, which had the effect of drawing the attention of Friends to the subject ; and in the Yearly Meeting for the year 1794, a large committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration, which finally resulted in the purchase of the farm of James Gibbons, in Westtown Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania (about six hundred acres), for £6083 6s 8d, equal to \$16,222.22. He was on the first committee appointed (Oct. 3, 1794) to take charge of the school, and so remained until his death. The school was opened for the reception of scholars in May, 1799 (the year of his decease), and has continued from that period to the present, educating numerous children of both sexes : the number of boarders having been, up to the year 1882, according to a statement published in a history of the school for that year, by Watson W. De-

<sup>1</sup> The full title of this tract is as follows: "Plan for a School, on an establishment similar to that of Ackworth, in Yorkshire, Great Britain ; varied to suit the circumstances of the Youth within the limits of the Yearly Meeting for Pennsylvania and New Jersey : Introduced with the Sense of Friends in New England on the subject of Education, and an Account of some Schools in Great Britain ; to which is added Observations and Remarks, intended for the consideration of Friends.

"Philadelphia,

"Printed by Joseph Cruikshank, 1796, 8vo."



wees, four thousand nine hundred and thirty-one boys, and six thousand and seventy-five girls.

In addition to the loss of property, he was on the 28th of September, 1793, bereaved of a daughter, who died of the yellow fever, aged thirty-two years; and in the next year, on the 16th of August, 1794, his wife expired at Downingtown, her native place, and was there interred. His own death occurred on Sunday, March 10, 1799, in the sixty-second year of his age.

Notwithstanding the evening of his days was clouded, and his spirits depressed by affliction and trials, and with a large family to support and a scanty purse, he has nevertheless left to his descendants a legacy more precious than gold,—the example of a chivalrous, conscientious, and untarnished life.

1606703





A SHORT ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
PARKE FAMILY.



# A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE PARKE FAMILY.

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THIS account of the Parke family was compiled by the late John Biddle (deceased October 19, 1884), from a fuller account contained in two MSS., written between the years 1824 and 1840, by the late James P. Parke.

With some additional matter afterwards discovered, and a few immaterial changes, it is here given as originally written.

It was thought desirable to preserve the record.

James P. Parke states: "Of my own immediate ancestry the earliest memorandum I have gives information of Thomas Parke, a member of the Society of Friends, then in Ireland as a resident; but whether his progenitors had come from England is uncertain. He appears probably to have been a farmer, and in the year 1720 owned some land in Bullilean, Ballaughmore, and Coolismactah." The family consisted of said Thomas Parke and Rebecca, his wife (whose maiden name J. P. Parke "presumes" was Hooper), and ten children, below named, of whom nine were then living.

1. MARY, born July 18, 1693, who had married Thomas Valentine.

2. ROBERT, born January 23, 1695, who in 1720 and 1721 appears to have been a storekeeper in Dublin.

3. SUSANNA, born October 22, 1696; whether she ever married, J. P. P. could never ascertain.



4. REBECCA, born November 22, 1698-99, who had married Hugh Stalker.

5. RACHEL, born October 26, 1700, who afterwards married John Robinson.

6. JEAN, born February 6, 1703, died February 12, 1705, and was buried in Friends' burial-ground at Ballikealy.

7. THOMAS, born January 13, 1704-5, who after his arrival in Pennsylvania married Jane Edge.

8. ABEL, born December 22, 1706, who had married Deborah —.

9. JONATHAN, born February 18, 1709, who afterwards married a Bradford Township, Chester County girl, Deborah Taylor.

10. ELIZABETH, born August 5, 1710, who subsequently married John Jackson.

What induced the family to remove to America, J. P. Parke could not ascertain. He could find no record of any particular persecutions, nor any indications of poverty. Whatever the motive, all of the family above named, excepting Mary, the first, and Susanna, the third child, on May 21, 1724, embarked at Dublin on the ship "Sizargh," of Whitehaven, Jeremiah Cowman, commander, bound to Whitehaven and thence to Philadelphia, having on board ninety-four passengers.

The ages of the two parents and their seven children, who thus embarked, are given at said date of embarkation as follows :

Parents,—

Thomas Parke, aged 64.

Rebecca, his wife, aged 52.

Children,—

Robert Parke, aged 29.

Rebecca Stalker, aged 25, with her husband. Hugh Stalker.

Rachel Parke, aged 24.

Thomas Parke, aged 19.

Abel Parke, aged 17, with his wife Deborah.



Jonathan Parke, aged 15.

Elizabeth Parke, aged 13.

After a rough passage they arrived in Delaware Bay, August 21, 1724. The family remained in Chester about three months after landing, and then removed to a temporary residence about two miles therefrom; part of the family travelling, during most of this time, in search of land to purchase. On December 30, 1725, Thomas Parke purchased from Thomas Lindley a tract of land in the Great Valley, in the township of East Caln, consisting of five hundred (500) acres (twenty of which were then cleared), with a log house erected thereon, for the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds.

In the month of May, 1726, the family removed from Chester Township to their new homestead. The land thus purchased by Thomas Parke is beautifully situated, on the great road leading from Philadelphia to the West. Of the five hundred acres in the tract, Thomas Parke gave to his son Robert one hundred and twenty-four acres, on which there was one of the largest springs in the county; to his son Thomas two hundred and seventy-six acres, reserving thereout a maintenance for himself and wife; and to his son Abel, the remaining one hundred acres.

The daughter Mary, with her husband Thomas Valentine, and their family, came to America to reside some time prior to 1735; but the daughter Susanna still continued to reside in Ireland, where she probably died unmarried.

The following extract from the minutes of Bradford Monthly Meeting confirms the statement that "the character of Thomas Parke the elder was held in high estimation among his neighbors."

"Thomas Parke came from Ireland about the year 1724, well recommended by certificate from Friends there, and some years after he was appointed an Elder for Caln meeting, in which station he remained until near his death, and was well respected by Friends in general. He departed this life the 31st of the 1st month, 1738, and was buried at Caln."





He attained the age of seventy-seven and one-half years. His widow survived him nearly twelve years, having attained the age of seventy-seven years at the time of her decease.

The one hundred and twenty-four acres of the aforesaid tract of land which Thomas Parke the elder gave to his son Robert were subsequently purchased by the son Abel (who thus became the owner of two hundred and twenty-four acres); and at a still later date Abel sold his two hundred and twenty-four acres to his brother Thomas, who thus became possessed of the whole of the tract of five hundred acres originally purchased by his father, Thomas Parke the elder.

ROBERT PARKE (the second child of Thomas Parke the elder) died unmarried, February 9, 1736-37, in the forty-second year of his age.

THOMAS PARKE, second (the seventh child of Thomas Parke the elder), on April 26, 1739, at the age of thirty-four years, married Jane Edge, then twenty-four years of age. They had seven children, below named. He carried on the business of farming, and died October 17, 1758, aged fifty-three years. Five years after the death of Thomas Parke the second, his widow, Jane, married James Webb, she being his third wife. They had no issue. The children of Thomas Parke the second, and Jane, his wife, were:

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| 1. Robert.  | 4. Hannah. |
| 2. Sarah.   | 5. Thomas. |
| 3. Rebecca. | 6. Jane.   |
| 7. Jacob.   |            |

Of the remaining brothers and sisters of Thomas Parke the second, and their families, J. P. Parke has little or nothing of special interest in his "Short Account of the Parke Family." He states as follows: "Of the children of Mary Valentine (the first child of Thomas Parke the elder), one named Robert, born in Ireland, was a minister of the gospel of the Society of Friends, and in the year



1781 visited England and Ireland in that service: and of *his* children the daughters married into the families of Malin, Sharpless, and Massey: and the sons into those of Ashbridge and Bond."

Many of the descendants of Rebecca Stalker (the fourth child of Thomas Parke the elder) yet live in Chester County.

Of the descendants of Rachel Robinson (the fifth child of Thomas Parke the elder), nothing is known excepting that such descendants existed. It is, however, known that said Rachel and her husband, "a sorry fellow," settled in White Marsh Township.

ABEL PARKE (the eighth child of Thomas Parke the elder) died in the month of July, 1757, aged fifty years. His issue is probably extinct, by the death of his only son, Thomas, unmarried.

Many of the descendants of JONATHAN PARKE (the ninth child of Thomas Parke the elder) are yet living in the vicinity of Downingtown, formerly called Downington, a village so named by the family of Downing, although one-half of the land on which it stands belonged to the Parke family.

ELIZABETH JACKSON (the tenth child of Thomas Parke the elder) married John Jackson, a person of very humble social position. They had three children, of whom nothing of interest is known. She died April 16, 1746, aged thirty-four and one-half years.

Of the children of THOMAS PARKE THE SECOND, and Jane, his wife:

ROBERT PARKE, the first child, inherited by his father's will the northern section of the tract of five hundred acres and a handsome stone residence thereon erected by his father a very short time prior to his decease. When thirty years of age he married, at East Caln, October 18, 1770, Ann Edge, aged twenty-two years. He died October 14, 1773, leaving a son and daughter. The son married, and his descendants yet (qu. 1835?) occupy the farm.

SARAH (the second child of Thomas Parke the second),



*Philad.* who was born March 29, 1742, when eighteen years of age married, at East Caln, September 29, 1760, Owen Biddle, of Philadelphia. From a manuscript by her husband with reference to her last illness and decease, we take the following: "She had long labored under a sore disorder which at times had nearly brought her to the grave." In the year 1793 she, as well as several others of her family, suffered from an attack of yellow fever, from which she recovered, but her eldest daughter Jane died September 28, 1793. This attack of fever and her trials at that time gave a shock to her tender frame which made it an easy prey to her old disorder,—“an asthmatic complaint, attended with chills and fever.” In the month of March, 1794, she had a return of this old disorder, from which she suffered for five or six weeks, and was then so far restored to health as to be able to take short drives.

In compliance with her own desire, and with the approval of her brother, Dr. Thomas Parke, she left her home about the 1st of August with the intention of paying a visit to her sister Rebecca Webb, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Accompanied by her son John, she travelled by very easy stages as far as the Great Valley, where she stopped to spend a few days with her relatives in that region. Here, while at the residence of her nephew Thomas Parke (son of her brother Robert), she was again attacked with “violent chills and fever,” which, in a very few days, resulted in her decease on the 16th day of August, 1794, at the age of fifty-two years. In her last hours she was attended by her husband, her daughters Sarah and Rebecca Owen Biddle, and her son John. Referring to these closing hours, her husband writes: “A sweet composure attended her mind the remainder of her time, and when she had occasion to mention any of her friends it was with expressions of love. Indeed, stronger marks of a mind at peace I never observed before. However great our loss may be, we have the consolation to believe it is her everlasting gain. ‘Behold the perfect and the upright, the end of that man is peace.’”

Her remains were interred in Friends' burial-ground at



East Caln, Chester County, Pennsylvania, near the remains of her father, her child Robert, and other relations.

REBECCA (the third child of Thomas Parke the second), at thirty-eight years of age, married her step-brother William Webb, who resided about a mile east of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She died January 30, 1816, aged seventy-one years, leaving no issue.

HANNAH (the fourth child of Thomas Parke the second), at twenty years of age married, November 13, 1767, Benjamin Poultney. They resided for some time in Lancaster, and afterwards removed to Philadelphia, where she died March 19, 1781, aged thirty-four years. There are numerous descendants of her now (1892) residing in the city of Philadelphia, of the names of Poultney, Williams, etc.

THOMAS (the fifth child of Thomas Parke the second), who was born August 6, 1749, O. S., and to whom the southern section of the aforesaid family tract of five hundred acres was bequeathed, directed his attention to the study of medicine, for which purpose he removed to Philadelphia, and pursued his studies under the supervision of Dr. Cadwallader Evans for three years. He took his degree of Bachelor of Medicine at the "College and Academy of Philadelphia" on June 5, 1770. In the year 1771 he visited Great Britain, where he attended first the lectures delivered at the Medical School of Edinburgh,—then in the zenith of its strength,—and afterwards the clinical practice of Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital, London, returning to Philadelphia in 1773. Here he was promptly taken into partnership by his old instructor, Dr. Cadwallader Evans, who shortly thereafter died.

Dr. Parke, through a long life, evidenced decided ability in his profession, and, owing to his intelligence, sound judgment, and strict integrity, was honored and respected by his fellow-citizens. In 1777 he became a physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital; in 1787 he was one of the founders of the College of Physicians at Philadelphia, and its president from 1818 until his death; and was for fifty-seven years a director of the Philadelphia Library, and his portrait is





now in their possession. On April 13, 1775, he married Rachel, the eldest daughter of James Pemberton, of Philadelphia. She died March 13, 1786. They had five children, two of whom died in early childhood. Of the three who survived their parents, Thomas, the eldest, devoted himself to the business of a supercargo in the East India trade, and died in September, 1840, aged sixty-four years; and Hannah and James P. Parke lived to quite an advanced age. None of them married. The MS. from which this is mainly compiled was written by the said James P. Parke. Dr. Parke died at Philadelphia, January 9, 1835, aged eighty-five years.

JANE (the sixth child of Thomas Parke the second) died in infancy.

JACOB (the seventh and last child of Thomas Parke the second) was an upright, worthy man, of humble disposition and moderate abilities. He was brought up to the business of blacksmithing, which he pursued until the year 1781, when he went into partnership with his brother-in-law Benjamin Poultney, at Philadelphia, in the card-making and ironmongery business. This partnership was dissolved before B. Poultney's death, and Jacob thereafter, until a few years before his decease, was engaged in the ironmongery business. He died unmarried, March 10, 1817, aged sixty-two years.



DESCENDANTS  
OF  
OWEN AND SARAH (PARKE) BIDDLE,  
TO A.D. 1892.



# DESCENDANTS

## OF

# OWEN AND SARAH (PARKE) BIDDLE,

## TO A.D. 1892.

### FIRST GENERATION.

1. OWEN BIDDLE, born in 1737 : married, September 29, 1760, Sarah Parke, daughter of Thomas Parke the second, of Chester County, Pennsylvania, and Jane Edge. Their children were :

2. Jane Biddle, *b.* July 29, 1761, *d.* September 28, 1793.
3. John Biddle, *b.* October 2, 1763, *m.* September 15, 1796, Elizabeth Canby.
4. Rebecca Owen Biddle, *b.* January 26, 1766, *m.* —, 1796, Peter Thomson.
5. Sarah Biddle, *b.* January 19, 1767, *d.* September, 1795.
6. Tacy Biddle, *b.* April 8, 1770, *d.* March 3, 1778.
7. Thomas Biddle, *b.* November 13, 1772, *d.* December 17, 1773.
8. Owen Biddle, *b.* April 28, 1774, *m.* —, Elizabeth Rowan.
9. Robert Biddle, *b.* March 3, 1776, *d.* July 15, 1777.
10. Clement Biddle, *b.* August 6, 1778, *m.* first, —, 1819, Mary Canby, second, —, 1851, Sarah (Morris) Tyson.
11. Anne Biddle, *b.* July 23, 1780, *m.* <sup>6.26.1852</sup> John Tatum, *d.* 1890.  
*See A. d. 12. 1892.*

### SECOND GENERATION.

3. JOHN BIDDLE, son of Owen and Sarah (Parke) Biddle, born October 2, 1763, was an apothecary and druggist of Philadelphia. He married, September 15, 1796, Elizabeth Canby, daughter of Samuel and Frances (Lea) Canby, of Wilmington, Delaware. Her grandfather, Oliver Canby, removed from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, to the Brandywine, at Wilmington, and built the first flouring-mill,



in 1742, within the borough of Wilmington.\* She died April 26, 1832. John Biddle died August 16, 1815. Their children were :

12. Samuel Biddle, *b.* June 10, 1797, *d.* February 14, 1826.
13. Sarah Biddle, *b.* February 28, 1799, *d.* January 22, 1879.
14. Joseph Biddle, *b.* January 26, 1801, *m.* April 7, 1831, Ann P. Hopkins.
15. James Canby Biddle, *b.* December 23, 1802, *m.* April 7, 1828, Sally Drinker.
16. Frances Biddle, *b.* November 29, 1803, *m.* October 18, 1827, Thomas C. Garrett.
17. William Biddle, *b.* May 17, 1806, *m.* May 8, 1828, Elizabeth C. Garrett.
18. Edward C. Biddle, *b.* January 5, 1808, *m.* May 14, 1832, Hetty H. Foster.
19. Margaret Biddle, *b.* June 8, 1810, *d.* September 25, 1810.
20. Rebecca Biddle, *b.* January 8, 1812, *m.* October 14, 1851, Alfred Cope.
21. John Biddle, *b.* June 28, 1814, *m.* December 15, 1852, Mary B. Foster.

4. REBECCA OWEN BIDDLE, daughter of Owen and Sarah (Parke) Biddle, born January 26, 1766; married, in 1796, Peter Thomson. Rebecca O. B. Thomson died in 1801. Children :

22. Sarah Biddle Thomson, *b.* January 1, 1797, *m.* September 30, 1841, Smith Upton, *d.* July 3, 1881.
23. Hannah Thomson, *b.* —.
24. A daughter, —, *b.* —, *d.* young.

8. OWEN BIDDLE (second), son of Owen and Sarah (Parke) Biddle, born April 28, 1774, was an architect and builder. He built the old permanent bridge over the Schuylkill River at Market Street, which was opened to the public in 1804, and published a work entitled, "Young Carpenter's Assistant; or, A System of Architecture adapted to the Style of Building in the United States." Philadelphia, 1805. Quarto. He married, *Nov. 2, 1797*, Elizabeth Rowan, daughter of Moses and Hannah (Jackson) Rowan. He died May 25,

\* Ferris's "Original Settlements on the Delaware," p. 202.





1806. Elizabeth R. Biddle married, secondly, John Broadbent, of Yorkshire, England, by whom she had four children. She died November 26, 1832. Owen and Elizabeth R. Biddle's children were:

25. John R. Biddle, *b.* February 15, 1799, *m.* November 21, 1821, Jane Marsh, *d.* October 26, 1854.
26. Anne Biddle, *b.* January 2, 1801, *d.* November 30, 1850.
27. Rebecca Biddle, *b.* August 30, 1802, *d.* March 25, 1804.
28. Owen Biddle, *b.* July 21, 1804; *m.*, first, March 4, 1831, Mary Ann Thompson; second, June 15, 1851, Sarah Lavery.
29. Elizabeth Biddle, *b.* May 6, 1806, *d.* July 17, 1833.

10. CLEMENT BIDDLE, son of Owen and Sarah (Parke) Biddle, born August 6, 1778: married *Mendenhall*, 1810, Mary, daughter of William Canby. He married, secondly, Sarah Tyson, *née* Morris, in 1851. Between the years 1800 and 1805 he appeared to be consumptively inclined, and he consequently made several voyages to the West India Islands and South America, thereby regaining his health, so that with great care thereof he lived to be an old man.

His business for a quarter of a century was that of a sugar refiner by the old process, from which he was driven out by the new process in 1832.

He took an active part in the founding of the Friends Asylum for the Insane at Frankford,—the first institution of the kind in America, being clerk from its organization in \_\_\_\_\_, until Orthodox Friends usurped possession thereof upon the separation of the Society. Believing this to be an act of injustice to many of the stockholders,—it not being an official Society concern,—he declined, notwithstanding threats and intimidations, to relinquish the clerk's minute-book in his possession, and would never give it up. It has been placed by his executors in the vaults of one of the banks in Philadelphia.

From early life he took an active interest in the affairs of the religious Society of Friends, of which he was a birthright member, and became successively an overseer and elder therein, retaining the latter position at the time of his death, February 10, 1856.



Clement and Mary (Canby) Biddle's children were :

30. Martha Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* —.
31. Robert Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* —, Anna Miller.
32. William Canby Biddle, *b.* September 25, 1816, *m.* February 21, 1838, Rachel Miller.
33. Henry Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* young.
34. Clement Biddle, *b.* November 17, 1819; *m.*, first, September 9, 1841, Susan T. Walton; second, April 10, 1845, Susan W. Cadwallader.
35. Anne Biddle, *b.* —.

### THIRD GENERATION.

14. JOSEPH BIDDLE, son of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born January 26, 1801, was a carpenter and builder. He married April 7, 1831, Ann P. Hopkins. He died August 26, 1835. Their children were :

36. Elizabeth M. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* April 17, 1866, Matthew Baird; *d.* July 9, 1871.
37. Joseph Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* September 23, 1865.

15. JAMES CANBY BIDDLE, son of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born December 23, 1802; married April 7, 1828, Sally Drinker, daughter of Henry S. and Hannah (Smith) Drinker. He was sent to Montrose, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, as agent for the "Drinker Estate" of about five hundred thousand acres of land. He died March 31, 1841. Their children were: *Sally, b. d. 1817*

38. Elizabeth Hannah Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 22, 1861, Rev. Wm. F. Halsey.
39. Henry Drinker Biddle, *b.* —.
40. Emily Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* August 16, 1834.
41. Hetty Drinker Biddle, *b.* —.
42. Frances Garrett Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* December 15, 1841.
43. Mary Drinker Biddle, *b.* —.

16. FRANCES BIDDLE, daughter of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born May 29, 1803; married October 18, 1827, Thomas C. Garrett, who was born in Philadelphia, March 30, 1805. About the year 1830 he entered into partnership with his father, Philip Garrett, under the firm-name of



Philip Garrett & Son, in the business of manufacturing car-wheels. This business not proving successful, he started the jewelry business on Chestnut Street, where he remained until 1863, when he sold out to Mr. Biddle, of the firm of Bailey, Banks & Biddle. In early life he was a member of the Pennsylvania Fire-Engine Company, and was for many years treasurer of the Hayes Mechanics' Home. He was a member of the Historical Society, and at one time a manager of the Apprentices' Library. He died November 17, 1888. Frances B. Garrett died September 5, 1873. Their children were:

44. Elizabeth Biddle Garrett, *b.*——.
45. Rebecca C. Garrett, *b.* ———, *m.* June 17, 1856, Jonathan E. Rhoads.
46. Frances Garrett, *b.*——.
47. Philip C. Garrett, *b.* ———, *m.* May 18, 1865, Elizabeth W. Cope.
48. John Biddle Garrett, *b.* ———, *m.* September 6, 1866, Hannah R. Haines.
49. Martha H. Garrett, *b.* ———.
50. Sarah Biddle Garrett, *b.* ———, *d.* November 10, 1841.
51. Hetty Biddle Garrett, *b.* ———.

17. WILLIAM BIDDLE, son of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born May 17, 1806; married May 8, 1828, Elizabeth C. Garrett, a sister of his brother-in-law, Thomas C. Garrett. She died January 21, 1881.

In 1834 and for many years following he was a director, and afterwards a controller, of the public schools.

In 1840 he was made a manager of the Magdalen Asylum, which office he held for more than forty years. In the same year he was elected a director of Girard College, which office he held for fourteen years, and took an active part in the organization of that institution.

In 1849 he was elected a manager of the Pennsylvania Hospital, which post he held for nearly thirty-eight years, the last fifteen of which he was president of the board.

In 1855 he was chosen secretary of the Minehill and Schuylkill Haven Railroad Co., and in 1883 was appointed its president. He died June 7, 1887. Their children were:



52. Samuel Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* November 2, 1842.
53. Rebecca G. Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* December 4, 1842.
54. Elizabeth C. Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* March 1, 1833.
55. Henry Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* July 11, 1834.
56. John W. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* May 8, 1861, Mary Hewes.
57. Philip G. Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* March 10, 1855.
58. Samuel Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* August 3, 1865, Katharine Harned.

18. EDWARD C. BIDDLE, son of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born January 5, 1808. He began his business life with the old and well-known dry-goods firm of Hacker, Brown & Co., and afterwards was a publisher and bookseller in Philadelphia for many years as a member of the successive firms of Key, Mielke & Biddle, Key & Biddle, and E. C. & J. Biddle & Co.

In 1857 he accepted the presidency of the Westmoreland Coal Co., which he held for twenty-seven years, until his health and advancing years necessitated his withdrawal. He was for many years a director and controller of the public schools, under the old system of appointment by the judges, and was also active in the affairs of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He was for a long time a director of the Northern Central Railroad Co. He is now (1892) living in Philadelphia in retirement. He married May 14, 1832, Hetty Harker Foster. She died March 28, 1848. Their children were:

59. Hetty Foster Biddle, *b.* —.
60. William Foster Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* January 2, 1860, Emily A. Leavitt.
61. Edward John Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* March 24, 1848.

20. REBECCA BIDDLE, daughter of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born January 8, 1812; married October 14, 1851, Alfred Cope, who was a member of the firm of Henry & Alfred Cope, of the Liverpool line of packets. His first wife was Miss Hannah Edge, of Chester County, Pennsylvania, by whom he had three children,—Mrs. Philip C. Garrett, Mrs. John E. Carter (deceased December 20, 1871), and Professor Edward Drinker Cope, an eminent naturalist,





author of the "Origin of Genera," "Extinct Batrachia and Reptilia of North America," etc. Rebecca B. Cope died February 18, 1876. Alfred Cope died December 4, 1875. By his second wife, Rebecca Biddle, he had one son:

62. James Biddle Cope, *b.* August 13, 1852, *m.* June 25, 1873, Marie Louise Saunders.

21. JOHN BIDDLE, son of John and Elizabeth (Canby) Biddle, born June 28, 1814; married December 15, 1852, Mary Blaikie Foster, a sister of his brother Edward's wife. He became in early life the East India manager of Foster & Chapman, at Calcutta, where he resided several years. Upon his return from India, about the year 1841, he became a member of the publishing house of E. C. & J. Biddle, and later was one of the founders, with the late Bishop A. Potter and William Welsh, of the night schools under the care of the Young Men's City Institute. He was for a long period secretary of the board of directors of the House of Refuge; and about the year 1859 he was elected president of the Locust Mountain Coal and Iron Company, which office he held until his death, October 19, 1884. Mrs. Mary F. Biddle died December 13, 1887. Their children were:

63. Esther Foster Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* May 8, 1885, Edward C. Clay.  
 64. John Biddle, *b.* January 23, 1857, *d.* December 5, 1858.  
 65. Mary Foster Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* September 30, 1885, John Neill.  
 66. Elizabeth Canby Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 6, 1888, Neilson J. Ritter.

28. OWEN BIDDLE (third), son of Owen and Elizabeth (Rowan) Biddle, born July 21, 1894; married March 4, 1831, Mary Ann Thompson. She died July 6, 1849. No issue by this marriage. He married, secondly, June 15, 1851, Sarah Lavery, of the Isle of Man, England. Their children were:

67. Annie E. Biddle, *b.* March 20, 1854, *d.* October 9, 1876.  
 68. Sarah Jane Biddle, *b.* February 21, 1856, *d.* November 6, 1859.  
 69. Adelaide Biddle, *b.* July 13, 1859, *m.* December 20, 1883, James Stark, Jr.



31. ROBERT BIDDLE, son of Clement and Mary (Canby) Biddle, born \_\_\_\_\_; married Anna Miller, daughter of Daniel L. and Hannah (Nicholson) Miller. She died August 12, 1891. He was of the firm of R. & W. C. Biddle & Co., hardware merchants, of Philadelphia, and has been the treasurer of Swarthmore College for a number of years, and still (1892) holds that position. Their children were:

- 70. Charles M. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* November 19, 1868, Hannah McIlvain.
- 71. Henry C. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* November 2, 1876, Anna Mary McIlvain.
- 72. Hannah Miller Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* January 5, 1882, J. C. W. Frisbuth.
- 73. Elizabeth Parrish Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* June 3, 1875, J. C. W. Frisbuth.
- 74. Martha Canby Biddle, *b.* —.

32. WILLIAM CANBY BIDDLE, son of Clement and Mary (Canby) Biddle, born September 25, 1816; married February 21, 1838, Rachel Miller. He died December 22, 1887. In commercial circles he was noted for business ability, energy, and integrity. He was one of the founders of the firm of R. & W. C. Biddle, then the leading hardware house in Philadelphia. He was an influential member of the Society of Friends, and one of the most respected and trusted supporters of Swarthmore College. He was also for years a manager of the Preston Retreat.

Rachel M. Biddle died October 7, 1892. Their children were:

- 75. Clement M. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 11, 1860, Lydia Cooper.
- 76. Frances Canby Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* June 18, 1862, Clement A. Griscom.
- 77. Helen Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* September 17, 1866, George B. Thomas.
- 78. Mary Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* January 28, 1869, Howard Wood.
- 79. Hannah N. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 18, 1877, Charles Williams.

34. CLEMENT BIDDLE, son of Clement and Mary (Canby) Biddle, born November 17, 1819; married, first, September



9, 1841, Susan T. Walton. She died December 6, 1842. Their children were:

80. William W. Biddle, *b.* July 14, 1842, *m.* April 22, 1874, Mary B. Taggart.

Clement Biddle married, secondly, April 10, 1845, Susan W. Cadwallader. She died February 19, 1892. Their children were:

81. Canby Biddle, *b.* February 23, 1846, *d.* April 13, 1857.  
 82. Francis C. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 22, 1873, Sarah Pennoek.  
 83. Annie Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* May 6, 1885, Edmund Sterling.

#### FOURTH GENERATION.

38. ELIZABETH HANNAB BIDDLE, daughter of James C. and Sally (Drinker) Biddle, born March 11, 1830; married October 22, 1861, Rev. William F. Halsey, of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He was from 1866 to October 15, 1882 (the date of his death), rector of St. David's (commonly called Radnor Church), Delaware County, Pennsylvania. She died February 19, 1881. Their children were:

84. William Biddle Halsey, *b.* —, *d.* September 4, 1863.  
 85. Mary Matilda Halsey, *b.* —.  
 86. James Biddle Halsey, *b.* —, *m.* May 12, 1892, Elizabeth Yarnall.  
 87. Walter Benedict Halsey, *b.* —, *d.* May 13, 1866.  
 88. Elizabeth Biddle Halsey, *b.* —, *d.* July 13, 1888.  
 89. Edward Biddle Halsey, *b.* —.  
 90. Millicent Halsey, *b.* —.  
 91. Betty Biddle Halsey, *b.* —, *d.* August 21, 1873.

45. REBECCA C. GARRETT, daughter of Thomas C. and Frances (Biddle) Garrett, born —; married June 17, 1856, Jonathan E. Rhoads, of Marple Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Their children were:

92. Joseph Rhoads, *b.* —, *m.* July 5, 1882, Harriet E. Masters.  
 93. Thomas G. Rhoads, *b.* —, *d.* March 31, 1872.  
 94. George A. Rhoads, *b.* —, *m.* June 19, 1899, Frances C. L. Tatum.  
 95. Edward G. Rhoads, *b.* —.  
 96. John Biddle Rhoads, *b.* —.



- 97. Frances Rhoads, *b.* —.
- 98. William Evans Rhoads, *b.* —.
- 99. Elizabeth Rhoads, *b.* —.

47. PHILIP C. GARRETT, son of Thomas C. and Frances (Biddle) Garrett, born \_\_\_\_\_; married May 18, 1865, Elizabeth W. Cope, a daughter of Alfred and Hannah (Edge) Cope. Children:

- 100. Frances B. Garrett, *b.* —.
- 101. Alfred C. Garrett, *b.* —.

48. JOHN BIDDLE GARRETT, son of Thomas C. and Frances (Biddle) Garrett, born \_\_\_\_\_; married September 6, 1866, Hannah R. Haines. Children:

- 102. Mary Rhoads Garrett, *b.* —.
- 103. Frances Biddle Garrett, *b.* —.

56. JOHN W. BIDDLE, son of William and Elizabeth (Garrett) Biddle, born \_\_\_\_\_; married May 8, 1861, Mary Hewes. She died May 25, 1874. Children:

- 104. William Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* October 8, 1885, Caroline C. Scattergood.
- 105. James G. Biddle, *b.* —.

58. SAMUEL BIDDLE, son of William and Elizabeth (Garrett) Biddle, born \_\_\_\_\_; married August 3, 1865, Katharine Harned. She died July 12, 1892. Children:

- 106. Elizabeth S. Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* November 5, 1890, Samuel Reeves Carter.
- 107. Mary H. Biddle, *b.* —.
- 108. Helen C. Biddle, *b.* —.

62. JAMES BIDDLE-COPE, son of Alfred and Rebecca (Biddle) Cope, born August 13, 1852; married June 25, 1873, Marie Louise Saunders. He changed his name by legal enactment to Biddle-Cope. He resides in Europe. Children:





- 109. Marie Louise Biddle-Cope, *b.* —.
- 110. Frances Margaret Biddle-Cope, *b.* —.
- 111. Alfred Cope Biddle-Cope, *b.* —, deceased.
- 112. John Stephen Biddle-Cope, *b.* —.
- 113. Gladys Mary Isabel Biddle-Cope, *b.* —.
- 114. Anthony Prosper Cyprian Mary Biddle-Cope, *b.* —.

63. ESTHER FOSTER BIDDLE, daughter of John and Mary (Foster) Biddle, born — ; married May 8, 1885, Edward C. Clay. Children :

- 115. Edward Biddle Clay, *b.* —.
- 116. Gladys Mary Clay, *b.* —.

70. CHARLES M. BIDDLE, son of Robert and Anna (Miller) Biddle, born February 3, 1814 ; married November 19, 1868, Hannah McIlvain. Children :

- 117. Anna Biddle, *b.* —.
- 118. Martha McIlvain Biddle, *b.* —.
- 119. Helen Biddle, *b.* —.
- 120. Hannah McIlvain Biddle, *b.* —.
- 121. Charles Miller Biddle, *b.* —.
- 122. Robert Biddle, *b.* —.

71. HENRY C. BIDDLE, son of Robert and Anna (Miller) Biddle, born October 12, 1845 ; married November 2, 1876, Anna Mary McIlvain. Henry C. Biddle died June 26, 1886. Children :

- 123. Hugh McIlvain Biddle, *b.* —.
- 124. Mary Biddle, *b.* —.
- 125. Henry C. Biddle, *b.* —.
- 126. Lillian Biddle, *b.* —.
- 127. Robert Rolston Biddle, *b.* —.

72. HANNAH M. BIDDLE, daughter of Robert and Anna (Miller) Biddle, born August 24, 1850 ; married January 5, 1882, J. C. W. Frishmuth. Children :

- 128. Edna Helen Frishmuth, *b.* —.
- 129. John Whitney Frishmuth, *b.* —.
- 130. Robert Biddle Frishmuth, *b.* —.
- 131. Clarice Frishmuth, *b.* —.



73. ELIZABETH P. BIDDLE, daughter of Robert and Anna (Miller) Biddle, born August 1, 1853; married June 3, 1875, J. C. W. Frishmuth. Elizabeth B. F. died December 17, 1879. Children:

- 132. Anna Biddle Frishmuth.
- 133. Mary Grandom Frishmuth.

75. CLEMENT M. BIDDLE, son of William C. and Rachel (Miller) Biddle, born December 24, 1838; married October 11, 1860, Lydia Cooper. Children:

- 134. Lucy Biddle, *b.* —, *m.* September 25, 1834, J. Reece Lewis.
- 135. William Canby Biddle, *b.* —.
- 136. Robert Biddle, Jr., *b.* —, *m.* October 3, 1889, Helen C. Conard.
- 137. Caroline Cooper Biddle, *b.* —.
- 138. Lydia Biddle, *b.* —.
- 139. Clement Miller Biddle, Jr., *b.* —.

76. FRANCES CANBY BIDDLE, daughter of William C. and Rachel (Miller) Biddle, born August 11, 1840; married June 18, 1862, Clement A. Griscom. Children:

- 140. John Acton Griscom, *b.* —, *d.* July 15, 1864.
- 141. Helen Biddle Griscom, *b.* —, *m.* June 20, 1889, Samuel Battle.
- 142. Clement Acton Griscom, *b.* —, *m.* September 18, 1889, Genevieve S. Lullow.
- 143. Rodman Ellison Griscom, *b.* —.
- 144. Lloyd Carpenter Griscom, *b.* —.
- 145. Frances Canby Griscom, Jr., *b.* —.

77. HELEN BIDDLE, daughter of William C. and Rachel (Miller) Biddle, born March 25, 1844; married September 17, 1866, George B. Thomas. Helen B. T. died March 28, 1877. Children:

- 146. Frances Canby Thomas, *b.* —.
- 147. Isaac Biddle Thomas, *b.* —.
- 148. Rachel Miller Thomas, *b.* —.

78. MARY BIDDLE, daughter of William C. and Rachel (Miller) Biddle, born December 17, 1849; married January 28, 1869, Howard Wood. Children:



149. Biddle Wood, *b.* —.
150. Helen Biddle Wood, *b.* —.
151. Alan Wood, third, *b.* —.
152. Howard Wood, Jr., *b.* —.
153. Clement Biddle Wood, *b.* —.
154. Owen Biddle Wood, *b.* —, *d.* February 26, 1882.
155. Rachel Biddle Wood, *b.* —.
156. Marion Biddle Wood, *b.* —.
157. Dorothy Wood, *b.* —, *d.* April 9, 1887.

79. HANNAH N. BIDDLE, daughter of William C. and Rachel (Miller) Biddle, born April 18, 1855; married October 18, 1877, Charles Williams. Children:

158. William Biddle Williams, *b.* —.
159. Frances Biddle Williams, *b.* —.
160. Eleanor Poultney Biddle Williams, *b.* —.

80. WILLIAM W. BIDDLE, son of Clement and Susan (Walton) Biddle, born July 14, 1842; married April 22, 1874, Mary B. Taggart. Children:

161. Edward Taggart Biddle, *b.* —.
162. William Canby Biddle, *b.* —.
163. Ferris Biddle, *b.* —, *d.* May 6, 1880.
164. Howard Biddle, *b.* —.

82. FRANCIS C. BIDDLE, son of Clement and Susan (Cudwallader) Biddle, born September 16, 1851; married October 22, 1873, Sarah Pennock. Children:

165. Lydia Pennock Biddle, *b.* —.
166. Mary Canby Biddle, *b.* —.

83. ANNE BIDDLE, daughter of Clement and Susan (Cudwallader) Biddle, born March 2, 1857; married May 6, 1885, Edmund Sterling. Children:

167. Clement Biddle Sterling, *b.* —, *d.* April 8, 1889.

#### FIFTH GENERATION.

92. JOSEPH RHODS, son of Jonathan E. and Rebecca (Garrett) Rhods, born April 3, 1857; married July 5, 1882, Harriet E. Masters. Children:



168. Edgar Joseph Rhoads, *b.* September 11, 1883.

94. GEORGE A. RHOADS, son of Jonathan E. and Rebecca (Garrett) Rhoads, born August 6, 1860; married June 19, 1890, at Wilmington, Delaware, Frances C. —, daughter of John R. Tatum. Children :

169. Thomas Garrett Rhoads, *b.* April 15, 1891, *d.* May 30, 1891.

170. Elizabeth Tatum Rhoads, *b.* June 24, 1892.

104. WILLIAM BIDDLE, son of John W. and Mary (Hewes) Biddle, born —; married October 8, 1885, Caroline C., daughter of Joseph Scattergood, of West Chester, Pennsylvania. Children :

171. John W. Biddle, Jr., *b.* —.

134. LUCY BIDDLE, daughter of Clement M. and Lydia (Cooper) Biddle, born September 26, 1861; married September 25, 1884, J. Reece Lewis. Children :

172. Lydia Cooper Lewis, *b.* —.

173. Clement Biddle Lewis, *b.* —.

136. ROBERT BIDDLE, JR., son of Clement M. and Lydia (Cooper) Biddle, born May 31, 1867; married October 3, 1889, Helen C. Conard. Children :

174. Mary Conard Biddle, *b.* —.

141. HELEN BIDDLE GRISCOM, daughter of Clement A. and Frances Canby (Biddle) Griscom, born October 9, 1866; married June 20, 1889, Samuel Bettle. Children :

175. Griscom Bettle, *b.* —.

142. CLEMENT ACTON GRISCOM, JR., son of Clement A. and Frances Canby (Biddle) Griscom, born June 20, 1868; married September 18, 1889, Genevieve S. Ludlow. Children :

176. Ludlow Griscom, *b.* —.

177. Acton Griscom, *b.* —.





## APPENDIX.

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## APPENDIX.

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THE oration delivered by Owen Biddle before the American Philosophical Society, March 2, 1781, was found in the Ridgway branch of the Philadelphia Library among the Du Simitière collection of pamphlets. As it is probably the only copy in existence, we concluded to reprint it,—not that it contains anything of special interest at the present time, but merely for the sake of preservation, and to gratify the curiosity of his descendants, who will doubtless be interested in its perusal. It is dedicated “to his Excellency Joseph Reed, Esq., President of the Supreme Executive Council of the State of Pennsylvania, and Patron of the American Philosophical Society for promoting useful knowledge,” and is preceded by the following



## ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE READER.

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IMPRESSED with a sense of the great importance of raising an affection for learning in the youth of America;—of forming some objects to divert their minds from a course of dissipation;—to animate them with an emulation to become useful and honorable citizens, and of the happy tendency of annual Oration, upon proper subjects, to promote these desirable ends, the author was induced to submit to the frequent solicitations of this Society, to undertake the arduous task imposed upon him;—a task for which he felt himself unequal; but the indulgent attention which was given to his feeble attempt at once shews the liberal and candid sentiments of the polite audience before whom it was delivered,—claims his most grateful acknowledgments, and will be an encouragement to others to succeed in this honorable duty, whose abilities as far exceed those of the author as does their diffidence.

The length of this Oration obliged him to omit two or three paragraphs when it was delivered, which he has taken the liberty to insert in this copy; as they will supply some chasms in the history of human improvements, he flatters himself they will not make this Oration less acceptable to the public.



## ORATION.

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GENTLEMEN,—When the old Romans were about to engage in any business of importance, they sacrificed so liberally to their gods, to induce them to be propitious to their undertaking, that clouds of incense ascended from their altars. Influenced by similar motives, those persons who have had occasion to address the public have offered up the incense of adulation, in high strains, to deprecate the severity of criticism. To suppose that the gods could be bribed by so paltry a purchase to favor unworthy designs, or that your judgment could be seduced by such means, would be but an ill compliment to their rectitude, or your understanding. An attempt to fetter the suggestions of the mind, or to extort an undeserved approbation, would be equally futile; we may as well expect to tread upon sand without leaving a trace of the feet as to offend the ear without making an unfavorable impression upon the mind. I shall, therefore, not take up your time with fruitless apologies or vain supplications, but shall submit my performance, with all its demerits, to be sported with, as the shuttle of the day, and afterwards to be consigned to everlasting oblivion with works of greater splendor and more merit. And in order that I may co-operate with the wishes of this Society, I shall undertake the task assigned me, and give you an historical sketch of those capital inventions and discoveries which have led to all the subsequent improvements in useful knowledge, and “so far increased the power of man over matter, and multiplied the conveniences of life,”<sup>1</sup> as to make a total change in the condition of the human race. It must be evident that a subject so copious can only be treated superficially in the course of an oration; many curious facts must necessarily be omitted, and important discoveries barely mentioned. The field is so extensive that it deserves a masterly pen, and abounds with many interesting anecdotes, which, in the language of Solomon, are like apples of gold set in pictures of silver.

The Supreme Being, by his almighty fiat, having brought the world into existence and organized the various parts, it may be inferred that man was created complete in stature, and without any mental or bodily defects. Thus circumstanced, he would resemble the imaginary inhabitants of Plato's republic, when brought from the confinement of a cave, where they had resided from their birth; his mind would be void of every idea, and when the grand volume of nature was displayed before

<sup>1</sup> Bacon.





him,—the magnificence and novelty of the scene, the splendor, extent, and decorations of the new mansions would at once strike him with astonishment, and agitate him with delight. And whatever he saw, felt, heard, smelt, or tasted was big with mystery and excited his curiosity. At this early period, when the powers of sense were first expanded, man commenced philosophy, and we are informed that he was not only inclined to the study of physics, by that natural propensity which is so deeply implanted in our nature that there is no satiety, but likewise by the immediate interposition of the Deity, for “the Lord brought every beast of the field and every fowl of the air to Adam, to see what he would call them.”<sup>1</sup> And that Adam and his descendants afterwards pursued their inquiries with success may be made appear, by the only important fact upon record, relative to the state of the arts at that period, which is that “Tubal Cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.”<sup>2</sup> If iron was found in a virgin state, it would require but little ingenuity to bring it into use, but to disclose it from the latent state in which it is concealed in the ore must have been the result of many curious experiments and deep researches; to investigate the nature and affinity of bodies, as well as the force of fire; for metallurgy is an important part of chemistry,—that instructive science which leads us more perfectly to the acquaintance with the occult qualities of bodies than any other. And, however insulting it may be to our pride, yet it is a fact, no less true than degrading, that every branch of science and the manual arts are so dependent upon this discovery, and it was so essential to our improvement and happiness, that it was impossible for a people to emerge from the rude and uncultivated state of nature without having previously the use of that most valuable metal. Upon a superficial view it can scarcely be conceived that our present elevated condition depended upon such a slender contingency as this circumstance; nor are we sufficiently apprised that some secret of nature may yet be concealed from the most prying eye, equally neglected by us as they are by the uninformed Indian, who views and tramples it under foot with indifference; ignorant of the qualities of which it is possessed, that would extend the organs of sense, and increase the powers of the mind, as much as metals have done; otherwise we should be encouraged to prosecute our inquiries with a more rational prospect of adding by some lucky discovery a new dignity, and a more certain felicity to the human race.

The uncertain state of the arts before the deluge, or what portions were preserved by Noah, makes it useless to spend much time in the investigation of a subject so obscure; we may perceive that the dispersion, which happened on the plains of Shinar, occasioned the descendants of that patriarch to relapse into the original state of ignorance, from which they had advanced in the antediluvian world; some time after

<sup>1</sup> Genesis. chap. II., ver. 19

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., chap. iv., ver. 22.



that period we may begin to trace the dawn of civilization and gradual improvement.

To treat the subject in its full extent, it would be proper to examine the claims of contemporary nations of antiquity to priority, and compare the progress of the arts amongst them; but this would lead me into too wide a field; I shall, therefore, confine my inquiries to those nations only from whom the various improvements in arts and science have been successively transmitted down to us, and which will be in the line of the Gentiles.

It may be questioned whether the Chaldeans, the Syrians, the Egyptians, or Phœnicians made the earliest progress in civilization and useful knowledge; nevertheless, that the Phœnicians were the first and chief of the Eastern nations to propagate amongst the Greeks the rudiments of science cannot be controverted. These enterprising people are said to be descendants from Canaan,—their territories lay along the lower edge of the Mediterranean Sea,—where they erected those two famous emporiums for trade, Sidon and Tyre. The former was supposed to have been founded by the eldest son of Canaan, who was of that name; the latter, which was anciently called Sor, was founded about two hundred and forty years before Solomon's temple.

The situation of these people was peculiarly favorable for naval commerce, and they soon improved those natural advantages to such an amazing extent, that, unassisted by the magnet, a knowledge of geometry, or the practical parts of astronomy, appears to be attended with insurmountable perils and difficulties, to us who have the benefit of those inventions.

From crossing rivers upon rafts and navigating boats made of reeds, or hollow logs, they improved their naval architecture and skill in navigation until they had built their triremes or galleys of the first magnitude; and by the same gradation, explored one place after another until they had circumscribed all the continent of Africa.

These people judiciously confined themselves to promote an extensive trade; they were not infatuated by a pernicious lust to enlarge their empire; security of navigation and a peaceful enjoyment of their commerce gratified the extent of their ambition; but in these desires they were insatiable, and had no other limits but those which bounded the ocean. The narrow confines of the Mediterranean could not afford scope enough for so adventurous a people, and they resorted not only to all the ports established within the Levant, but likewise to the southward and northward of the straits then called Hercules' Pillars, and reached even as far as the British Isles,—known at that time by the name of the Cassiterides,—and, if Herodotus is to be credited, they sailed, by the direction of Pharaoh Necho, out of the Red Sea, all round the coast of Africa, returning through the mouth of the straits. To complete this voyage employed them three years, and it was performed



long before the Argonautic expedition, which has been so much celebrated by the Greek poets that the vessel in which it was made is exalted to the skies, and forms one of the Constellations. From these circumstances we may perceive how early the Phœnicians became great proficient in the art of navigation, when other nations were so supinely indolent and wretchedly ignorant that they were strangers to that spirit which animates us to enlarge the sphere of our knowledge and increase the means of our happiness.

While this nation was improving their navigation and extending their commerce, they did not neglect a very extensive trade by land, which they carried on to a great advantage to Syria, Babylonia, Arabia, and even to India. In short, they are said to have engrossed the trade of the eastern world; hence we may perceive how enterprising these people were, and how deservedly their merchants are mentioned in Scripture, as equal to princes.

A navigation and commerce so extensive could hardly be prosecuted without giving rise to geometry, astronomy, and arithmetic, and we are accordingly informed that they either had their origin amongst them or were greatly improved in their hands; nor were the advantages resulting from commerce confined to these branches of science only, for every useful art and every branch of manufacture are supported by trade; and, as these people advanced in their naval and commercial affairs, they gradually rose, from a simple state of nature, to a state of refined improvement; and from inhabiting huts made of flags and rushes,—being clothed with the skins of beasts, and depending upon the casual repasts which hunting afforded, they made such improvement in various arts, that to them we are obliged not only for many of the conveniences of life, but for some of the greatest refinements amongst the elegancies we enjoy, particularly that valuable commodity, glass, which was discovered at Sidon, and for which they were early eminent. Tyre was no less famous for its scarlet color and purple dye, which has long been lost; besides the exceeding fine linen which they wore, which was their own invention and the product of their own country. These were some of the early improvements of the people who afterwards extended their skill in every art that was ornamental or useful, to such a degree, that whatever was pleasing for its elegance, either in apparel, furniture, buildings, or other things, was distinguished by way of excellence with the epithet *Sidonian*.

But, unfortunately, there are few conditions of mankind but what have their reverse, and if we revere this ancient people for the active spirit which transformed them from a state of wretched indigence and ignorance to one of opulent ease and elegance, yet we cannot but regret that riches and prosperity as naturally produce arrogance, licentiousness, the most effeminate voluptuousness, and extravagant debauchery, as that an excess of wine will produce inebriation; unless, by a well-



directed education, there is an early bias given to the mind that will confine it to laudable objects and virtuous purposes.

The happy condition of the Phenicians flowed in a great degree from the invention of the alphabet; the discovery of metals loosened the bonds of ignorance, and letters contributed to dispel it. By what person or with what nation they were invented is not clear; by some historians the invention is attributed to the Chaldeans; by others the honor is given to the Syrians, but more probably to the Egyptians; but of this matter we are as uncertain as we are about the primitive language; yet we cannot doubt but it originated with one of these nations, as it was earlier in use among them than any others. The Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus, otherwise called Thut, Thoth, or Mercury, has the most suffrages as being the inventor of letters; if he was, they have not done that justice to his memory by securing the undisputed honor of the invention to him alone, which they have to ruffians and villains, who have disturbed the repose, violated the rights, and retarded the civilization of mankind; and whose memories will be execrated when a more just taste, correct judgment, and improved state of human knowledge are established.

Wherever a knowledge of letters was cultivated the change they produced in the condition and influence they had on the manners of mankind were striking; for, previous to this discovery, the earth might teem with the most nutritious juices and the richest delicacies; the dews and the rains of heaven might descend, and the genial warmth of the solar rays be spent useless and in vain; in short, but for these discoveries we had been at this time not elevated above a Haron or a Hottentot; or in the condition which Julius Cesar found our ancestors on the island of Great Britain, with their bodies naked, exposed to the inclemency of the seasons; their food such roots as the woods afforded, and their huts as rude and unfit to resist the keen blasts of a northern air as an Indian wigwam.

Although the commercial genius of the Phenicians led them to explore all the regions within their reach, and gave them an opportunity of *first* spreading those arts and that knowledge which they had acquired, nevertheless they had not the precedence of the Egyptians either for antiquity or improvements in literature or art. The genius and manners of this nation were in some degree the reverse of the other; instead of applying themselves to naval commerce, they superstitiously avoided it; and it was not until the reign of Psammitichus that the Greeks and other foreign nations were freely admitted upon their coasts. From this time the intercourse between those nations was increased, and the Greeks gradually derived all the profound learning and mysteries of the Egyptian priests, which contributed to raise them to an envied degree of excellence in many branches of the polite arts.

The Egyptians have been deservedly renowned for the early cultiva-





tion of every kind of learning that can contribute to the ornament or felicity of human nature; they were the first who instituted a regular system of civil polity; they were particularly attentive to the education of their youth, and appear to have been well acquainted with the force of that excellent maxim of the great Lord Verulam, "that, instead of being so attentive to multiply laws, we should be more careful of education," which would be a law of itself that will operate not only to restrain us from the violation of every moral and religious obligation, but likewise to animate us with a virtuous emulation to do good.

By this people the first temples were erected in honor of their gods, and for the performance of worship; and priests were appointed to preside over the sacrifices which were made upon the appearance of every new moon, and other set times and seasons; this made it necessary for them to observe the lapses of time, with the changes of the phases of the planets, and the recurrence of eclipses, which by degrees became improved into that sublime science astronomy, which was greatly cultivated by the Egyptian priests, as appears by the series of observations which were preserved by them.

It is not to be wondered at that so curious and prying a people should invent, as an auxiliary to their recollection, those characters which are called hieroglyphics. It is an art of that obvious use, and so necessary to mankind, that there has not been any nation discovered but what have had some similar contrivance: the Mexicans and Peruvians had their paintings and symbols; the North Americans their belts of wampum; and the Chinese their characters, which were increased to answer every word in that copious language, and are said to amount to eighty thousand. But when we consider the simplicity and power of the alphabet for those people with whom it originated, it must have been the result of the deepest reflection and the greatest effort of genius to invent a few articulations which are capable of an almost endless combination. The difficulty arising from the use of the hieroglyphics to record the astronomical observations, and the inconvenience of burdening the memory with such an infinite number of characters probably suggested the invention of letters, which, I have before observed, is attributed to the Egyptian Hermes. When the alphabet was first introduced into Greece by Cadmus it consisted of but fifteen letters; eight others were afterwards added by the Greeks.

The Egyptian priests being first possessed of the knowledge of their hieroglyphics, and afterwards of letters, all the records of the nation were committed to their care, which gave them an infinite advantage over the rest of the people, which they improved to establish their influence, so as to confine all the learning of those times to their own order; and they became so famous for their professional skill in the sciences, that it is mentioned to the honor of Moses that he was learned in all the knowledge of the Egyptians.



The doctrines of the immortality of the soul, of future rewards and punishments, and of a Providence were first taught by them. If these doctrines were craftily founded in civil policy, it discovers the perfection to which they had brought the art of government; but if, on the contrary, they were the honest opinions of those priests, derived from physical observations and metaphysical inquiries, it shows the near relation there is between the religion of nature and a well-authenticated revelation.

Besides this kind of knowledge, they made great progress in geometry, which the annual overflows of the Nile had given rise to. They had likewise cultivated that delightful art, chemistry, which inclined them to natural magic, as astronomy had done to astrology, the spurious offspring of true science; the mechanic and polite arts, such as architecture, sculpture, and painting, were considerably improved by them, as may be seen in those durable monuments of their power and antiquity, the pyramids; likewise in that famous building called the Labyrinth, in which the great assembly of the nation used to meet, and in their canals and other remains of their public works.

But as these people had little intercourse with other nations, their manners were not contaminated by the influence of foreigners; and although their princes were infected by that spirit of arrogance and presumptuous vanity which was characteristic of that era, and which is almost inseparable from a station so elevated and independent.

Yet it was not until after this time that the Egyptians arrived at the degree of voluptuousness the Phœnicians introduced into that country when it was conquered by Alexander the Great, and which was improved to such a pitch of extravagance by the refinements of Anthony and Cleopatra, as made them no less singular for their wanton excesses while living, than remarkable for the tragic manner of their deaths. Such was the state of literature and the arts, and such were the manners of this nation when the Greeks were first admitted to an intercourse with them. Before this period the several colonies which had been formed in different parts of Greece, and on other coasts of the Mediterranean, remained in a very barbarous state,—a set of freebooters, without any order or government, and they are only known at this time for their rapine and acts of violence. Fortunately for their characters, the disgrace and ignominy attending their acts of barbarous ferocity have been consigned to oblivion for want of letters to convey them to later periods, hence the accounts of their early transactions are mostly fabulous. Their piratical course of life produced a martial and enterprising spirit, which continued and formed a part of their national character until they had finished the natural course of all political societies in their subjugation.

There is a great uncertainty as to the time when the first colonies were established in Greece. Cærops is said to have brought one from Egypt into Attica so early as the year 1556 before the nativity. Athens was



founded twenty years after, Sparta about the same time by Lacedæmon, and, half a century later, Corinth by Sisyphus; but these events are too remote to be traced back with any degree of precision.

The next important event in the series of their history was the institution of the Olympian games by Pelops, which afterwards came under such excellent regulations that they had a very extensive influence on the manners of the people, and was the foundation of an era by which they computed the date of every historical event.

Poetry, music, and every production of the fancy or imagination have always preceded the more elaborate branches of literature, and we are informed that these were introduced amongst the Greeks by Orpheus, from Egypt, some time after the institution of the Olympic games; and it is well known that the native Indians of America had some instruments on which they performed their rude and unharmonious compositions when they were first discovered,—for whatever indulges the slothful habits and sensual inclinations of uncultivated nature, that provokes to voluptuousness and gives a new relish to those pleasures which had become indifferent by repetition, could not fail to be passionately embraced, although they did not possess the powerful and fascinating charms of music; hence fable metaphorically informs us with what raptures it was received by the Greeks,—that a divine energy was attributed to Orpheus's lyre, and stones and trees were animated by the magic sounds.

The great man took those virtuous advantages which the power of music gave him, to convey instructive and useful lessons upon religious, civil, and moral subjects, in so forceful and insinuating a manner as to soften the minds and win the affections of this barbarous people, and thereby inclined them to a change of manners and a disposition to submit to government.

After Orpheus, Musæus, and Linus had returned from Egypt, the Grecians entertained the highest veneration for Egyptian literature, which led many of their most distinguished characters to travel into that country, to be initiated into the mysteries of the Egyptians and to acquire the profound learning of their priests.

That very ancient and eminent legislator Lycurgus derived his knowledge of civil policy from that source, which he so happily accommodated to the temper of the Lacedæmonians, that it continued in force for several centuries. This admirable man first brought Homer's works out of Asia,<sup>1</sup> and made his countrymen acquainted with their value.

From this period for three hundred years we have no account of any remarkable discovery or invention in arts or science; yet we trace in the history of the people a gradual advance in civilization. The knowledge of religion, which had been introduced amongst them by Orpheus, produced a great veneration for their gods, and they were no less remark-

<sup>1</sup> Asiatic Greece.



able for their piety than their justice and love for their country, which frequently animated them to such acts of magnanimity that this series of their history is called by the name of the *heroic times*, to distinguish it from all others.

As science gradually advanced many persons devoted themselves to acquire it with an enthusiastic passion; of these there were seven who attained to such a degree of eminence as to have the title of *wise* conferred upon them. Thales of Miletus was the first of these, and it was given to him most deservedly, both for his moral rectitude and speculative learning. He was not only skilled in such parts of geometry as were then known, but is said to have invented several new problems; he was the first Grecian who made inquiry after natural causes; observed that iron was attracted by the magnet, and that amber would acquire the same power over straw and other light bodies by attrition. The discovery of bodies possessed of such rare qualities, and extraordinary powers raised such a veneration for them, that he supposed them to be animated and influenced by a spirit. It has been a happy circumstance for mankind that all the singular properties of magnetism and electricity were not disclosed until more liberal principles were established, which secures us from those impositions and terrors which a partial knowledge of such secrets might produce.

It was this sagacious person who first predicted an eclipse of the sun, and ascertained the number of days there are in a year. He observed the quantity of the sun's greatest declination, and its apparent diameter, and was acquainted with the spherical figure of the earth.

Thales was succeeded by Pythagoras, who was his pupil in his early youth; but by the force of an amazing genius, the most unwearied application and invincible perseverance in his pursuit after knowledge, he made such attainments as to be deservedly considered as the prince amongst the ancient sages; and he received such distinguished marks of respect from his scholars that they used to swear by his name; and not only his disciples, but Thales, and those of his predecessors who possessed the same opinions, took their name from him, and were called Pythagoreans. In imitation of his master Thales, he likewise travelled into Egypt, where he got admission into all the secret learning of their priests; from thence he was taken into Persia, where he lived with the most excellent amongst the Chaldeans and the magi, who instructed him in the most sublime parts of their religion; there he improved his knowledge of music, arithmetic, and other mathematical sciences. By the Chaldeans he was particularly instructed in the principles of the universe, and it is asserted that he conversed with Ezekiel the prophet, and other Hebrews, from whom he obtained a part of his learning.

Upon his return to Samos, the place of his nativity, he erected a school, and besides some whimsical ceremonies and religious opinions





which he established, he taught that fund of useful learning he had so laboriously acquired.

To him are we indebted for the true system of the universe, which places the sun in the centre and the earth in the planetary chorus, and which has been revived in modern times by Copernicus to his immortal honor. The natural consequence of this system is that this earth is not an extended plain, which not only refuted those idle fables invented by the poets and received for facts, that the stars descended into the ocean to cool themselves from the scorching heat of the sun, but contributed to introduce a more perfect system of geography and astronomy.

In the oration delivered before this society, by our learned and ingenious Vice-President, Mr. Rittenhouse, he began his instructive and elegant history of astronomy about this time; this makes it unnecessary to dwell any further upon that branch of science. From this period until the days of Aristotle, there was no capital invention or discovery made amongst the Grecians, although, in this space of time, they were remarkable for having extended all the branches of polite literature and the fine arts to the highest pitch of eminence; and notwithstanding the fertile and redundant genius of Aristotle and the multiplicity of his writings, he has contributed but little to our stock of useful knowledge, except by his improvements in logic. However, we have been made rich amends by this intermission, by that excellent geometrician, Euclid, who was some time after Aristotle. The elements of geometry which he composed contain all that kind of learning which had been invented and preserved to his time, and afford clear and infallible rules for the investigation of the most knotty and entangled subject with certainty; his propositions are judiciously arranged, so as to lead by a proper gradation from the most simple case where truth is to be sought and separated from error through many more difficult and perplexed; his definitions are plain and concise; his axioms natural, certain and satisfactory, and the lemmas drawn from them are judicious and corroborating,—in short, this is not only the most ancient treatise on this subject, but the most perfect that has ever been written; and it is probable that we are indebted to this science for the logical and correct method of reasoning by syllogisms which are retained in use in the schools to this day.

This penetrating genius likewise wrote upon the nature and properties of the conic sections, a subject of so intricate a nature, and so barren of every obvious use, that we cannot comprehend the motives which induced this great man and other ancient geometers to devote their attention, with such a passion and unwearied application as they did, in their pursuit after that kind of learning. For, notwithstanding the amazing usefulness of the conic sections to succeeding generations to deduce a true system of physics, yet they could not have had the most remote idea of their value; and we can only consider them as passive



agents in the hands of the Deity, who were predisposed to collect materials for the grand fabric of the Newtonian system.

Besides these elaborate performances, this profound genius wrote a treatise upon optics; and about this time that celebrated mechanician and geometer, Archimedes of Syracuse, treated upon hydraulics and the mechanic powers; he likewise constructed a most curious machine to represent the motions of the planets.

This was the state of literature amongst the Grecian republics when they were subdued by the Romans, then in the zenith of power and military reputation. There they only studied, and by a solid and just taste improved the learning which they had derived from the Greeks. No important addition was made thereto except by Pliny and Claudius Ptolemy; the former applied himself to the study of nature, and was sacrificed by too eager a pursuit after knowledge as he was exploring an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Having approached too near, he was overwhelmed by a shower of burning cinders. The latter, who was his contemporary, rejected the system of the universe invented by Pythagoras, and formed one on the supposition that the earth is at rest in the centre; and that the sun, planets, and all the fixed stars revolved around it daily, which he explained by means of various cycles and epicycles, so as to establish it in preference to the more simple one of his predecessors, and it was denominated the Ptolemean system, after him. This person was a sagacious mathematician and an able geographer; he first applied parallels and meridians to maps; and considering the state of navigation in his time, we cannot but admire his extensive knowledge of cosmography. He wrote the first treatise upon trigonometry, and some other pieces which were a valuable acquisition to science.

If we consider the gradual and successive manner in which art and invention followed each other, we may conclude that the ancients were on the eve of making those incomparable discoveries which were reserved to honor and adorn these modern times, when that very affecting event occurred,—the laying waste the whole Roman empire by the irruption of the Northern nations under Alarie, and ultimately by the famous Attila, who acquired, by the ravages and desolation which he had made, the title of *The Scourge of God*. This involved the Western world in universal barbarism, which was afterwards extended through all the East by the Saracens under the furious fanatic and impostor, Mohammed, and at once reduced mankind into the same degree of ignorance of useful literature in which they were a thousand years before. But at the same time that we are obliged to mention this circumstance, so unfavorable to the reputation of the Saracens, from a regard to truth, and to preserve a due connection in this performance, yet, when we consider that their successors first collected, from amongst the Greeks, the remains of ancient literature which had escaped the general desolation, it obliterates the unfavorable impression their ravages had made.



It was in the year of the Caliph Almamoun that an affection for learning began amongst the Saracens; and this caliph was the friend and patron of learning and learned men. He spared no cost to procure translations of the writings of the Greeks upon mathematics, philosophy, and other branches of science, which were in a short time so generally diffused over that empire that the progress of learning amongst them was no less rapid and wonderful than that of their arms. From Africa they transferred it to their brethren in Spain, where they founded several universities; and we are not only indebted to them for reviving mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physic, and the philosophy of Aristotle, but they likewise introduced the Indian figures called the Nine Digits, and invented that valuable branch of science, Algebra.

The philosophy of Aristotle held forth so much of the pageantry of science, was so fit to gratify a pedantic vanity, and gave such advantage to the litigious disciples of that subtle philosopher, that it was better calculated to captivate the ignorant and incline them to study, than the simple though more important facts which the true philosophy teaches. This occasioned the system of learning introduced by these Arabian Moors to be propagated through all Europe, where it had an invincible dominion for several centuries.

From that time till the end of the fifteenth century will be distinguished as the most memorable era for useful inventions and discoveries. The great variety of the secrets of nature which chemistry had laid open to its devotees produced that credulous set of enthusiasts, the Alchemists, who tortured every subject of nature in all the ways of resolution and composition, with their vain and extravagant hopes; but at the same time that they failed in their researches after the universal menstruum and perpetual elixir, they advanced the knowledge of nature, and have been chiefly instrumental in establishing a true system of physics. It is to their labors that we are beholden for many valuable compositions,—the foundation of useful arts, as well as that powerful preparation, gunpowder, which has transformed the ancient method of war, and added to the security of the weak.

About the middle of this century that grand and capital invention was made, which forms one of the principal epochs in the progress of science, that is THE ART OF PRINTING. The difficulty of diffusing knowledge, even after writing was in use, is evident, as the labor of making copies would confine the use of books too much to the powerful and opulent; this made too great an inequality among mankind,—between those whose minds were irradiated by every kind of useful knowledge, and those who, unfortunately, were denied by their penury all access to those fountains of learning; a circumstance always unfavorable to general happiness, to liberty, and the dignity of human nature. On the contrary, the facility with which copies were multiplied by the press, and books distributed amongst all ranks of people, has made every in-



vention of art, or improvement of science, as universal as the influence of the sun. In short, this art is of a perfect republican nature; without respect of persons, it diffuses its benefits alike to all.

The art of printing had its rise amongst that learned and ingenious nation, the Germans, as well as some other valuable arts and institutions<sup>1</sup> which have contributed greatly to improve our felicity, and to refine our manners. John Fust, or Faust, of Mentz, in Germany, has the reputation of being the author of this invention, about the year 1430; from this time forward every kind of human literature which had been previously cultivated, became more generally diffused, and all the remains of ancient knowledge explored. Science no longer crept on by slow advances, improvement flashed upon improvement, and one ingenious invention succeeded another with such rapidity, that greater progress was made in one age than had been before from the foundation of the world.

After this facile method of conveying instruction was introduced, and mankind put into a capacity for inheriting the wisdom and inventions of preceding ages, with the agreeable change it had made in their situation on these regions of the earth, as if the great parent of the universe had intended to enlarge the sphere of its utility, and afford a more extensive scope for the powers of the press,—and that the benefits arising from this truly valuable part might encircle all this globe; it was succeeded by the application of the magnetic needle to nautical purposes.

I have already mentioned the early discovery of the attractive quality of the loadstone towards iron, but the directive power was unknown in Europe until the year 1260, when it was said by some that Marco Polo, of Venice, brought the knowledge thereof from China. Others again attribute the discovery to Flavio Gioia, a Neapolitan, about the year 1302; but it was not applied to the use of mariners until after the art of printing was invented, in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

It is certain that the Chinese have a reasonable pretension to this noble discovery,<sup>2</sup> and the account given by Duhalde, of the veneration they pay it, shows the high opinion they entertained of its value.

Previous to the use of the mariner's compass, the Portuguese had

<sup>1</sup> To give a detail of all the improvements in arts and sciences for which mankind are indebted to this nation would far exceed the bounds of an oration. It is sufficient to observe, that they were the foremost and most successful in an early cultivation of useful knowledge; and it is to the penetration, virtuous integrity, and undaunted spirit and zeal for true gospel liberty, which inspired the first reformers amongst them, that our minds and consciences are emancipated from the most intolerable tyranny.

<sup>2</sup> Duhalde says that the Chinese had a sort of mariner's compass which they placed upon a bed of sand, not only that it might be soft, but to preserve it from the shocks of the vessel, the agitation of which every now and then destroyed the equilibrium of the needle. They likewise contained pastilles for perfumes, which they burnt incessantly; this is not the only trait which the Chinese superstition bestows on these compasses, which they look upon as certain guides in their voyages, for their blindness is so exceeding great as to offer them burnt sacrifices.





explored a considerable part of the western coast of Africa, by keeping near the shore; but enterprising and experienced as this nation was in the art of navigation, they were cautious how they ventured out of sight of land. To launch far into the ocean would have been an act of temerity that invited certain destruction; but after the compass had been made use of by navigators, and they found that the certainty of its direction might safely be relied on, they ventured boldly into the main.

At this period Providence had raised up for the purpose of opening a communication between the old and new world, that adventurous navigator, Christopher Columbus. This great man was animated to pursue the discovery with an ardor equal to enthusiasm, and a confidence bordering upon inspiration. He was endowed with a peculiar sagacity of mind, which pervaded the ignorance, the errors, and prejudices of those times respecting geography. By consulting historical records, attending to the narration of voyagers, and from his own observations, he was convinced that there was either another continent or a more direct passage by sea to the East Indies.

The persevering obstinacy with which he solicited the kings of Spain, Portugal, and England to employ him in the discovery was a presage of his success; and by his conduct during that long voyage of impatient expectation, he had no less opportunity to show an assemblage of heroic virtues. A natural sedateness and gravity did not overcome a cheerful affability, and a meekness of temper was happily blended with the most invincible courage; in short, he was magnanimous without ostentation, intrepid but not rash, had firmness of mind without any obduracy of heart, and a capacity to improve the phenomena of nature, to preserve the obedience, and to maintain the confidence of a despairing and mutinous crew. To do justice to so exalted a character by description is difficult, and for a comparison we have not his parallel. For Cæsar to pass the Rubicon and decide the fate of empire, or for Alexander to attempt the conquest of the rude and effeminate nations of the East, required souls of a desperate texture. But, on the one hand, their dangers might be foreseen, and their chance of success estimated, with the power, wealth, and illusive fame they would enjoy, to spur them on to their extravagant attempts; and, on the other hand, while schemes of conquest intoxicated their brains and petrified their hearts, they were insensible to the miseries they produced, and the odium and just abhorrence their wild ambition would create.

But in this case of Columbus there were strange climes, with great and uncertain vicissitude of seasons to encounter; an unexplored and tremendous ocean of an unknown extent to cross, with all the fabulous tales which the most fertile mind could invent, or the greatest credulity swallow, to deter him from the glorious enterprise; but the object was of that magnitude, the glory so solid and permanent, the motives so



noble and benevolent, and success was fraught with such extensive and happy consequences, that like the increasing impetus of a falling body, his mind gained new force by reflection; and as he advanced on the voyage, his constancy was confirmed, and his ardor inflamed, which made every difficulty to sink before him, and on that ever-memorable eleventh day of October, in the year of our Lord 1492, he made the first discovery of American land.

To the mariner's compass, or that extraordinary property which the magnetic needle is endowed with, of pointing towards the poles, we must attribute the acquisition of this hemisphere,—no less valuable to the human race than if a passage had been gained through the ethereal regions to another planet. Here all nature wore the face of novelty, and the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms were so diversified from the European continent that it opened a new field for the naturalist, rich with an infinite variety of the treasures of nature and of the works of God.

After this, further discoveries were prosecuted with great success, and this globe circumscribed, which demonstrated the spherical figure thereof, agreeable to the conjectures of Thales above two thousand years before.

From this time all the habitable parts of the earth were visited in some degree, which gave us an opportunity to survey all the productions of nature, and they became either the subjects of merchandise, or of philosophic investigation, which exploded all the idle conceits produced by ignorance, sloth, or bigotry, and a sound philosophy was substituted in their stead, which has its basis in the study and analysis of nature.

Besides the art of printing and the application of the magnet to nautical purposes, this century produced another capital invention, no less capable of enlarging the sphere of human knowledge, or expanding the mind so as to afford a more comprehensive view of the creation, and the subordinate and dependent state of man; that is, the TELESCOPE.

The mariner's compass having made us acquainted with and put us in possession of the concealed parts of this earth; the telescope, on the other hand, has extended our views from earth to heaven, and brought those remote objects which had bid defiance to the imperfect organs of vision so near, that the perfect view it gave was like a new creation. We no longer remained in suspense with respect to the justice of the Pythagorean system; every appearance confirmed this hypothesis; and instead of contemplating the world as the only habitation of animated beings, and that the sun and stars rose and shined only to shed their kindly influence upon us, our views became expanded from the limited scene; and not only other worlds but other suns, with other systems innumerable, stretch their diffused cycles through the wide expanse of unlimited space. The works of the Deity were no longer confined. This world,



formerly so important, was reduced on the enlarged scale, and the power, goodness, and glory of the great and omnipotent Creator was a theme that made every sentimental heart to swell with hosannas innumerable.

Besides these most excellent improvements of the moderns, the microscope, air-pump, and logarithms were contrived; the Torricellian vacuum and the electric or Leyden phial discovered, from which many curious and useful deductions were made: but time requires that I should take a review of what has been advanced, and come to a conclusion.

From this sketch of the progress of human knowledge it is evident that all our valuable attainments depend upon a diligent and close application in our pursuit after facts, which are painfully and laboriously acquired; that discoveries have succeeded each other, by a slow and gradual advancement, and that one invention is linked in with and leads to many others which are remote and unforeseen.

That in the beginning, the Deity inclined the first man to the study of natural history, which was improved by the antediluvians until they found out metals from which resulted civilization, the mechanic arts, navigation, and commerce. That these produced more refined improvements and speculative knowledge, such as government, religion, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, and the use of letters. Afterwards inventions were preferred, extended, and diffused; an inquiry into natural causes was made, and mathematical learning cultivated; a knowledge of optics, hydraulics, hydrostatics, and the mechanical powers inquired after.

That in more modern times algebra and chemistry were introduced; printing, the mariner's compass, the telescope, and the air-pump were invented; the electric or Leyden phial discovered, navigation extended, all nature explored, and new objects for philosophical invention produced; the refined subtilties and sophistry of ancient philosophy were detected, the redundancies lopped off, and such parts only retained as opened our understandings and added to the store of facts.

Experiments were found to be the touchstone of truth, from which the true principles of nature were to be discovered, and which, accommodated to the laws of motion, have laid the foundation of the mechanical and geometrical philosophy. Hence we have been taught to direct our inquiries with method, and pursue them with success; science is no longer "vainly so called;" the object is truth, and the fruit happiness.

This informed us how to begin our inquiries at the proper avenue; matter, which is the basis of creation, was analyzed to its most simple state, and the obvious properties thereof were noted. Of itself, it was found to be perfectly inert, subject to a principle of gravitation, which was reciprocal and universal; that it had solidity, and was capable of



cohesion, extension, divisibility, and mobility, under various modifications.

It was that father of experimental philosophy, Lord Verulam, who exposed the vanity of ancient sophistry. It was he that informed us that one fact was of more value than an hundred arguments, and recommended the study and analysis of nature so ably, that future philosophers have conducted themselves by his plan;<sup>1</sup> particularly that diligent inquirer into the mysteries of nature, the great Mr. Boyle, as well as some noble and distinguished foreigners. Amongst these the learned and pious Monsieur Pascal was not the least eminent: he demonstrated the cause of the Torricellian vacuum, and explained the gravitation of the air; likewise the noble Galileo,<sup>2</sup> who is no less remarkable for his sufferings for having asserted the diurnal motion of the earth, than for having first applied the telescope to the heavens, and discovered the true phases of the planet Venus, the Medicean stars, and other wonderful appearances in the celestial regions.

Nor is science less indebted to many dignified characters in earlier times amongst the moderns, particularly Regiomontanus, Copernicus, Tycho, and Kepler, who have immortalized their names by their improvements in astronomy; and with a superior sagacity, industry, and affection for that branch of science, they have advanced it greatly toward perfection.

They have proved the elliptical orbits of the planets; that the areas they described by radii drawn from the sun to the planet were proportioned to the times of their revolutions, and that the squares of their periodic times were as the cubes of their distances from the sun, relatively.

But all these noble discoveries and valuable acquisitions to our stock of knowledge would have been insufficient to unravel the true principles of the universe, without the assistance of algebra. This elegant branch of science, under the management of Descartes, Barrow, Wallis, Huygens, Leibnitz, and a great number of other eminent men,<sup>3</sup> had enlarged

<sup>1</sup> See his *Instauratio of the Sciences*.

<sup>2</sup> "The celebrated Galileo was confined in the Inquisition for six years and put to the torture for asserting the motion of the earth, and was at last obliged to retract his opinion to obtain his enlargement; immediately upon his release he looked up to the heavens in a contemplative mood, and then down upon the earth several times, and at last broke out in this sarcastic ejaculation,—*and the earth will still move!*"—*Bartlett's Italian Library*.

<sup>3</sup> It would be the effect of ignorance, or an illiberal spirit, not to acknowledge the early advantages which science derived from the patronage and ingenious labors of Alphonso, King of Castile; Sacro-Bosco, professor of astronomy at Paris; Purbach in Austria, and his disciple, Regiomont. A humorous but irreverent expression of Alphonso is preserved, which at once shows his pleasantry and his penetration. When the complex system of Ptolemy was explained to him, he was so much displeased by the perplexity which his multitude of orbs and orbits gave him, that he said, "that if God had called him into His council, the machine of the world would have been much less complex."—*NATURE DISPLAYED*.





the utility of both speculative and practical mathematics to such an extent that the most perplexed and intricate problems were reduced with as much ease as Alexander discovered the Gordian knot, and led to the invention of that abstruse, compendious, extensive, and sublime doctrine of fluxions.

In this advanced state of natural, mathematical, and astronomical knowledge, it was morally impossible that a genius of so transcendent a nature as the incomparable Newton should avoid making an arrangement of these elements into that elegant system of the universe, which is worthy of the divine architect.

Before this wonderful person, our conjectures were unsupported by demonstration; but he happily applied mathematics to philosophy, which enriched the world with the most important discoveries, and unfolded the most complicated laws of nature. The vast eccentricity of the cometary bodies and their motions round the sun were deduced from the universal laws of attraction, and the seeming irregularities of the moon were reconciled to the same pervading cause, operating by the joint influence of the sun and the earth; the various phenomena of the tides, with all the difficulties attending their solution, were obviated. That the earth is a flattened sphere was plainly shown to be the consequence of its diurnal rotation; and while other naturalists sought for the origin of colors in the mixture of light and shadow, he showed that they were congenial with the rays of the sun, and contained the element of light itself. In short, so various and so important were the discoveries which he made, that they lead us, link by link, by tracing effects, up to the great and eternal first cause, and have illuminated the world by their effulgence,—not only while he was living, but have laid the foundation for future acquisitions, after he was entombed in the silent grave.

A system so perfect, so rational, and well supported as his, had almost put a period to further advances in science; and on a superficial view we should be ready to conclude that there remain but scanty gleanings after these illustrious laborers in the fields of science; but there was reserved, and with confidence I assert it, there is yet in reserve, a vast fund to gratify the utmost ambition of the inquisitive sons of America. It only requires the same predominant affection for science, the same ardor, and the same assiduity, directed by a liberal education, and new instances will occur of the elements being brought into subjection by her philosophers, as well as the swift darting lightning,<sup>1</sup> or the turbulent ocean,<sup>2</sup> by that accomplished patriot and philosopher, our illustrious president.<sup>3</sup> Nor are our boasts confined to him alone, and I trust the

<sup>1</sup> By the discovery of metallic points to discharge the electric fluid in a gentle current.

<sup>2</sup> By pouring oil upon the surface of the water, this sagacious philosopher (Dr. Franklin) experienced the miraculous effect of assuaging the agitation of the waves.

<sup>3</sup> Doctor Franklin.



claims of our departed Godfrey<sup>1</sup> and Bartram<sup>2</sup> will not be permitted by this society to perish unrecorded.

Finally, gentlemen, knowledge being progressive, the only means in the power of this society to promote it is by stimulating their fellow-citizens to a diligent attention to the phenomena of nature and a minute observance of her laws; to excite an affection for learning; to promote experimental inquiries and mathematical knowledge, "whose words are so many oracles, and works are so many miracles, which blabs out nothing rashly, nor designs anything from the purpose, but plainly demonstrates and readily performs all things within its compass."<sup>3</sup>

For these purposes have learned associations been made in Europe,<sup>4</sup> with such infinite advantages, and such vast funds of useful knowledge collected, preserved, and diffused among mankind, "that the power of man over matter is increased, and the conveniences of life so multiplied"<sup>5</sup> that we live in a state of improved ease, dignity, and opulence.

To imitate the example of those associations, and to walk in their ways, will be the proper business of this society; a labor so honorable, a scheme so beneficent, and pursuits so virtuous and benevolent, will obtain the patronage and support of every good man, and merit the blessing of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Thomas Godfrey, a native of Philadelphia, the original inventor of that useful sea instrument called Hadley's quadrant; of the honor and emoluments of the invention he was unfortunately deprived. See the *American Magazine* for July and August, 1778, for some account of his life.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. John Bartram, a native of Pennsylvania, has distinguished himself amongst the learned of the most civilized nations, for his extensive acquaintance with the natural history of America, particularly botany, and his ingenious disquisitions upon some singular phenomena in the fossil kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Barrow. Introductory Lecture to his course of the mathematics.

<sup>4</sup> Learning is a more durable source of wealth to a nation than the mines of Golconda or Peru, and of more solid fame than the most splendid military achievements. The numerous societies of literature which have been instituted in France under the patronage of their kings, and supported with a munificence and liberality equal to so august and powerful a monarch and so great a nation, have contributed not only to their glory and reputation, but to their true interest. It is to the cultivation of learning and the support given to learned men that their artists are eminently skilful in every branch of manufacture, and so happily blend the ornamental with the useful that their taste is no less admired for its elegance than it is envied for its inimitable excellence. It is to the same cause we must attribute the flourishing state of their commerce; that their armies are the scourge and terror of tyrants; that their marine is improved for the protection of the oppressed, and to restrain the unlimited insulence of an unprincipled power; that economy pervades every branch of their administration; that their finances are improved and their taxes not burdensome; that their ministers and officers of state are endowed with that address, equanimity, prudence, the most efficient wisdom and diffusive benevolence, which has not only been productive of happiness and security to the nation, but made their kings pre-eminent in glory, in power and felicity.

<sup>5</sup> Bacon.



COPY OF THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF OWEN  
BIDDLE.

I, Owen Biddle of the City of Philadelphia, being of sound disposing mind and memory, though weak in body, do make and declare this to be and contain my last Will and Testament, viz:

It is my will that either of my children may take at an appraisement any article or articles of my moveable property that they may choose, excepting only those which I have hereinafter particularly specified and bequeathed.

I give and bequeath unto my daughter, Rebecca Owen Thomson one of the two large Chests of Drawers,—she taking her choice.

I give and bequeath unto my daughter, Anna Biddle the other of the said Chests of Drawers, and the old family Bible in three volumes.

I give and bequeath unto my said daughters, Rebecca and Anna, equally to be divided between them the sum of sixty three pounds which was due from the shop to their sister, my late daughter Sarah, and also all the wearing apparel of my late wife, and of my said daughter Sarah, deceased.

I give and bequeath to my son Owen my Clock and case thereto belonging.

I give and bequeath to my son Clement my Desk and Bookcase.

I give and bequeath to my son John one half of the furniture of the Shop, and of such other articles, the property of the late copartnership between him and me, as shall not have been previously divided between us; I also give to my said son John, the Still with its appurtenances.

I give and bequeath to Hannah Fairlamb the large old Watch which formerly belonged to her father.

I give and bequeath unto my Executors, and the survivors and survivor of them, the sum of Fifty dollars, In trust, that they shall pay the same to the Treasurer for the time being of the Institution established under the care of the Yearly Meeting of Friends for Pennsylvania etc., for the School Education and religious Instruction of youth, in one or more boarding Schools, for the use of that Institution; which Legacy for the use of the said Institution is not to be paid until after the settlement of my affairs, which were lately in the hands of James Brinckhurst, Richard Wells and John Field, and which the two former have assigned to my son John Biddle and Thomas Stewardson.

I do hereby order and direct, authorize and empower my Executors hereinafter named, and the survivors and survivor of them, to sell and dispose of all my moveable property which I have not hereinbefore otherwise disposed of, either at public or private sale, as they, in their discretion shall think proper; and I do hereby also order and direct, authorize and empower my Executors, and the survivors and survivor of them, to



grant, bargain, sell and dispose of, either at public or private sale or sales, in their discretion, all such tracts of land, parts and portions of my Real Estate which I heretofore assigned to said James Bringham, Richard Wells and John Field, and lately reassigned to my son John Biddle and Thomas Stewardson, In trust, for the benefit of my creditors to whom I was indebted, on the Eighth day of the First month, One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty three, as shall remain my property after the debts by me owing at that time are discharged; and I authorize and empower my Executors, and the survivors and survivor of them, to make and execute good and sufficient Titles for the same, or any part or parcel thereof in fee simple to the purchaser or purchasers thereof, his, her or their Heirs and Assigns forever.

And as for and concerning all the Monies which shall arise from the aforesaid sales—the same shall be applied in the first place to the payment of my share of the debts due from the late copartnership between me and my son John, and to the discharge of my own private debts contracted since the Eighth day of the First month, One thousand seven hundred and eighty three, and to the payment of my funeral expenses, and the pecuniary Legacies hereinbefore bequeathed.

*Item.* I give, devise and bequeath all the Rest, Residue, Reversion and Remainder of my Estate, Real, personal and mixed, whatsoever and wheresoever, unto my five children, John Biddle, Rebecca Owen Thomson, Owen Biddle junior, Clement Biddle junior, and Anna Biddle, their several and respective Heirs, Executors, Administrators and Assigns forever, equally to be divided between them, part and share alike, as tenants in common, and not as joint tenants.

And I nominate and appoint my sons John Biddle and Owen Biddle junior, and my son-in-law Peter Thomson to be the Executors of this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all former and other Wills by me made, and declaring this only to be my last.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal this second day of the Third month called March, in the year of our Lord, One thousand seven hundred and ninety nine.

OWEN BIDDLE. { SEAL }

Signed sealed published and declared by Owen Biddle, the Testator, as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of us.

The 21st. and 22d. lines of the first page being first erased.

JACOB PARKE,

RICH<sup>d</sup> HUMPHREYS.

Affirmed, and the Executors affirmed, the 28th. day of March 1799.

Before P. WAMPOLLE D. REG.

2777













